

John Calvin's Theological Contribution as an Extension of His Pastoral Ministry

by

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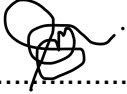
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Declaration

I declare that “**John Calvin’s Theological Contribution as an Extension of his Pastoral Ministry**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signed.....

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Abstract

It is common place in academia for the 16th century Reformer, John Calvin, to be portrayed as a theologian than as a pastor. Thus, his works are often interpreted from a theological perspective, neglecting the pastoral approach that had an obvious influence on his writings. As we study the life and works of John Calvin from the time he was appointed pastor of Geneva until his death, we are confronted by the pastoral framework from which he wrote some of them. This framework is also apparent in his works if one becomes conscious of it. This comes as no surprise as Calvin spent most of his life serving in the pastoral office. As indeed one of the foremost of the Reformed theologians, Calvin wrote extensively: his works range from the pastoral letters which he frequently wrote to his friends and acquaintances to his more theological studies. This investigation of some of the latter finds that they are underpinned by pastoral concern. Hence it is argued that in their academic engagement with such works, serious scholars of Calvin will need to consider the pastoral framework in each work, whether obvious or not. Calvin did not primarily write most of his works to make a theological stand in the academic world of his day but rather to instruct the ordinary Christian in the faith the Reformers had discovered in Scripture. No work of Calvin makes that plainer than the preface to the *Institutes*. Hence this study of Calvin focuses on this pastoral framework.

Key Terms: Calvin, extension of ministry, intellectual, ministry, pastor, scholar, theologian, theological

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Melanchthon's designation of Calvin as "the theologian" (Parker 1954:61) seems to have taken more precedence over his other title "pastor" as a framework for studying and interpreting Calvin's life and works (Wright, 2009:4). A great deal of the criticism of him as a cold, detached scholar (Godfrey, 2009:7; McGodrick, 2010:4) seems to emanate from Melanchthon's emphasis on Calvin's role as a theologian.

Contrastingly, Calvin and some authors who have written about him, seem to present a different view of his primary role in the church. For instance, in his concise autobiography in the dedication to the Psalms commentary, Calvin seemed to be implying that his role was primarily as a pastor as he compared his role in the church to that of King David in Israel: "And yet, as he [David] was elevated from the sheepfolds to the highest position of authority, so God took me [Calvin] also from obscure and small beginnings and honored me with the office of herald and minister of the gospel." (Calvin, 1557:51.) Beza (1564:9), Calvin's contemporary biographer, in *Life of John Calvin* also described Calvin as primarily being engaged in pastoral ministry.

Amongst the contemporary authors on Calvin, John Piper, probably the most vocal of the Calvinists today (Olson, 2011:16), commenting on Calvin's transition from his scholarly ambitions remarks, "Never again would Calvin work in what he called the 'tranquillity of . . . studies.' From then on, every page of the forty-eight volumes of books and tracts and sermons and commentaries and letters that he wrote would be hammered out on the anvil of pastoral responsibility." In her article published in *Christianity Today* in 1986, Dr. Fatio, then a professor at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, opens with these words: "One is accustomed to speaking of Calvin as the Reformer of Geneva. It would be more precise, perhaps, to call him the pastor of Geneva, because Calvin was above all a pastor, and his work as a reformer was simply the extension of his pastoral ministry." Godfrey (2009:8) concurs with Fatio, "The real Calvin was not in the first place a man who lived to influence future generations. Rather, he was a spiritual pilgrim finding anew the apostolic Christianity expressed in the Bible and serving as a faithful minister of that Word in the church of his day...The essential Calvin was a pilgrim and pastor"

If it is true that Calvin's primary office in the Protestant church was as pastor, then the study and interpretation of Calvin's works needs to engage with the potential pastoral framework in his works.

1.2 Problem Statement

The emphases on Calvin's role as a theologian over his pastoral role in the study and interpretation of his works seems to have caused a distortion of his theological contribution in the church and his image. A lack of engagement with the pastoral framework in Calvin's works means that any study of his work that does not take this frame into account is one sided. Thus, an investigative and analytical study of whether these works were an extension of his pastoral reach and how, will be the central concern of this study. This will cause future studies on Calvin's theology to engage with this framework.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

This dissertation investigated and analysed Calvin's views on the pastoral office and the major genres (agenda for church reform, the catechism, letters and treatises, commentaries, recorded sermons and the *Institutes*) of his works identified by Wright (2009:5), with the aim of demonstrating how Calvin's works can be viewed as an extension of his pastoral ministry.

1.3.2 Objectives

The following objectives were explored to answer the problem statement:

- Calvin's academic background was traced to determine whether it had an influence on his literary output
- Calvin's view of the pastoral office was investigated to determine how it had an influence on how he carried out his pastoral ministry
- The pastoral framework in the major categories of Calvin's works was investigated and analysed
- Calvin's view on the intellectual responsibilities of ministers in carrying out their duties was examined

1.4 Thesis Statement

The central argument of this dissertation is that from the time Calvin was appointed pastor in Geneva until his death, some of his major works were an extension of his pastoral ministry rather than a scholarly contribution in the academic world of his day.

- If this is true, first, it will help us to consider Calvin's pastoral framework as we study and interpret his works.
- Second, it will help us avoid hastily dismissing Calvin as a cold-hearted scholar based on some of his theological views.
- Third, it will show that intellectual astuteness is not necessarily an impediment for Christian ministry as anti-intellectuals in the contemporary church argue, but should aid ministry.

1.5 Methodology

Colladon and Beza, Calvin's contemporary biographers (Parker, 2006:30), as well as Calvin's voluminous literary output, have made it an attainable goal for contemporary research on Calvin, whether on his life or his literature, to be meaningfully conducted by means of the historical research method. According to Borg (in Cohen *et al*, 2000:158) "Historical research has been defined as the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events. It is an act of reconstruction undertaken in a spirit of critical inquiry designed to achieve a faithful representation of a previous age." As original works were the main sources for this study which involved critically analysing and interpreting such sources on Calvin with the aim of reaching sound conclusions, the method employed was that of historical research.

The particular approach of this historical study is what historians have termed a *problem oriented approach*. In this approach, Tosh (1984:45) points out, "...a specific historical question is formulated, usually prompted by a reading of the secondary authorities and the relevant primary sources are then studied; the bearing which these sources may have on other issues is ignored, the researcher proceeding as directly as possible to the point where he or she can present some conclusions."

This type of approach involves *historical criticism*, an established historical research method that seeks to determine what actually happened in history (Unisa, 2014:25).

Snyman (2011:12) explains, “The goal of this method is to recover the original meaning of the text at the time of writing”. This involves critical analysis of the original sources. The strength of this method in this study is that it will provide [an] “...intellectual sincerity as well as courage to ask questions rooted in honest exegesis” (Snyman, 2011:13) and this will be important as we examine the pastoral framework in some of Calvin’s major works.

Another method used was *historicism*, which seeks to do two things. On the one hand, from Ranke’s influence, to avoid drawing moral lessons from the past but to just narrate the facts of history without interpretation (Unisa, 2014:25). However, Carr’s (1987:12) reaction to Ranke, maintaining that raw historical facts without interpretation are no history at all, is perhaps an overreaction but a legitimate one. The strength of Ranke’s method is that it takes seriously the purity of original historical facts, which represent parts of historiography, but its weakness lies in the argument that mere historical facts without interpretation are not beneficial to society, which is the strength of, on the other hand, the positivistic tradition of the French Annales School (Unisa, 2014:26). Hence, both approaches which fall under historicism were employed in this study of the extension of Calvin’s pastoral ministry through his works.

- Chapter 2 is an analytical description of Calvin’s academic background which became a major influence in the quality of his literary output
- Chapter 3 focuses on defining the pastoral office from Calvin’s views taken from some of his major works that expound on the subject. By employing a critical exegesis on Calvin’s teaching on the pastoral office and the biblical texts on which he based his teaching, this approach sought to define Calvin’s understanding
- Chapter 4 is a critical analysis of some of Calvin’s major works: Agenda for Reform, Catechism, Letters and Treatises, Commentaries, Sermons and the *Institutes*, attempts to demonstrate the intentional pastoral nature of Calvin’s theology.
- Chapter 5 examines the intellectual responsibility that Calvin emphasised was necessary in fulfilling the pastoral office. This was done through an exegesis of biblical texts used by proponents of anti-intellectualism and those used by Calvin against anti-intellectualism in his contemporary church

1.6 Classification of Chapters

1. Introduction
2. The Academic Influence
3. The Pastoral Office
4. Ministry Through Intellect
5. Intellectual Responsibility of the Pastors
6. Summary and Conclusion

1.7 Calvin's Literature

It is difficult to deal with the amount of literature that Calvin produced: he wrote quite extensively and when he himself was not writing, stenographers were recording his teachings, both his sermons and his lectures (Godfrey, 2009:62; Parker, 2006:161). Thus, we have several primary sources from Calvin despite some of them being lost, such as his sermons (Godfrey, 2009:62). Calvin's views on some of the topics that were essential to establish the argument of this dissertation, such as his observations on the pastoral and the scholarly office and on his primary vocation, are well documented in some of these primary sources. A brief study of these provided understanding of Calvin's works in relation to his pastoral ministry.

1.7.1 The Pastor and the Scholar

Ephesians 4:11 seems to be the key text in Calvin's teaching on church government; he writes,

Those who preside over the government of the church in accordance with Christ's institution are called by Paul as follows: first apostles, then prophets, thirdly evangelists, fourthly pastors, and finally teachers [Eph. 4:11]. Of these only the last two have an ordinary office in the church; the Lord raised up the first three at the beginning of his Kingdom, and now and again revives them as the need of the times demands. (Calvin, 1559:1056.)

According to Calvin, the pastor and the teacher form part of the four orders of the church, pastors, teachers, elders and deacons, each of which fulfils a particular role in the church (Calvin, 1539:58). In *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, he highlights these different roles: the pastors have the responsibility of preaching and administering sacraments; the teachers – also known as doctors – of instructing the believers in correct doctrine; the elders of training believers in godliness through discipline while the deacons are responsible for the physical wellbeing of believers in the church (Calvin, 1539:58-66). What is significant for our discussion of Calvin's role in the church is that he viewed the two offices (pastor and teacher) in Ephesians 4:11 as distinct and, unlike some relatively recent scholars like John Stott¹ (1979:163) who argue otherwise, Calvin writes,

¹ In his commentary on Ephesians (*The Message of Ephesians*) Stott (1979:163) argues that the pastor and the teacher in Ephesians 4:11 is the same office: "Since the definite article is not repeated in the expression 'some pastors and teachers', it may be that these are two names for the same ministry."

Next come pastors and teachers, whom the church can never go without. There is, I believe, this difference between them: teachers are not put in charge of discipline, or administering the sacraments, or warnings and exhortations, but only of Scriptural interpretation—to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers. But the pastoral office includes all these functions within itself. (Calvin, 1559:1057)

Consequently, according to Calvin the teacher functions as “a scholar” of the church. This is also evident in *The Geneva Confession* (2006:63) where Calvin stipulates that the teachers must be educated to be able to interpret the Scriptures and teach others the correct doctrine, a role expected from scholars. Calvin did also expect the pastors to be educated as Godfrey (2009:67) points out, but that was because, according to him, the role of the pastor overlapped with the teacher’s role.

And so, even though it could be postulated that Calvin occupied both offices as Ryken (2009) points out, according to his view of the two offices, it does not appear that Calvin would have been undermined by the title “pastor”, despite his significant theological contribution in the history of the church. It seems that he viewed himself as a minister of God’s Word primarily and this is evident in his own account of his role.

1.7.2 Calvin’s Primary Office

From Calvin’s account of his life in the dedication to his commentary on the Psalms, it appears that Calvin viewed himself primarily as a pastor as he refers to his ministry in Geneva as his “vocation”, “Then loosed from my vocation and free [to follow my own desire], I decided to live quietly as a private individual. But that most distinguished minister of Christ, Martin Bucer, dragged me back again to a new post with the same curse which Farel had used against me. Terrified by the example of Jonah which he had set before me, I continued the work of teaching.” (1557:54) That Calvin was referring to his pastoral ministry when talking about his vocation, may be deduced from a few things he mentions.

- Firstly, by being “loosed” he was referring to his banishment from Geneva and this can be deduced from what he’d said earlier that in Geneva his vocation was as a pastor (Calvin, 1557:54)
- Secondly, the “desire” that he wanted to pursue was his scholarship, which he had intended to pursue from the beginning (Calvin, 1557:53), and thus he could not have been referring to his scholarship as his vocation

- Thirdly, it is common knowledge that in Strasbourg Calvin was appointed pastor by Bucer (Parker, 2006:91-92) and in this dedication, he referred to this vocation as “another post”.
- Fourthly, according to Calvin, teaching was also the work of the pastor (1559:1054) and Calvin said he continued the “work of teaching”, referring to his pastoral work.

His reply to Farel when the latter requested him to write a commentary on Genesis is also telling of the fact that Calvin viewed his primary vocation not as that of a scholar but a pastor, which he refers to as his “present calling”:

As to my observation on Genesis, if the Lord shall grant me longer life and leisure, perhaps I will set myself about that work, although I do not expect to have many hearers. This is my especial end and aim, to serve my generation; and for the rest, if, in my *present calling*, an occasional opportunity offers itself, I shall endeavour to improve it for those who come after us. I have a mind to set about writing several things, but as my wife is now in ill health, not without danger, my attention is otherwise engaged (in Godfrey, 2009:8)

1.7.3 Ministry through Intellect

Contrary to the frequent portrayal of an image of Calvin as a detached scholar (Godfrey, 2009:7; McGoldrick, 2010:5) his literature seems to reveal a concerned and affectionate pastor; four genres of his literature can be pointed out.

- Firstly, the purpose of the *Institutes* is pastoral. He said, “This was why I published the *Institutes*—to defend against unjust slander my brothers whose death was precious in the Lord's sight. A second reason was my desire to rouse the sympathy and concern of people outside, since the same punishment threatened many other poor people.” (1559:52)
- Secondly, his commentaries, which are perceived as scholarly, were pastoral. In the preface to the commentary on the Psalms, Calvin declared that in his interpretation of the Psalms he cared more for the building up of the church than for the numbers that would be attracted to his commentary because of its academic precision (1557:57). Thus, it would not be farfetched to expect the rest of his commentaries to have been written with a similar concern. And as one reads Calvin's commentaries the desire for the edification of the reader is particularly striking (Haroutunian, 1958:15-16).

- Thirdly, on the pastoral nature of his letters and treatises one only needs to read these to be confronted by the theological precision and the pastoral inclination evident in them. His reply to Bishop Sadolet, which is both a letter and treatise, stands out. Parker (2006:104) remarks that this was one of Calvin's best writings and yet this work was evidently pastoral (Calvin, 2006:221-256).
- Fourthly, his sermons were pastoral. As already noted, Calvin believed that the main way he fulfilled his work as a pastor was through preaching² and he carefully prepared his sermons; they were not just a work of scholarship but the work of a pastor (Godfrey, 2009:66-67).

It appears therefore that even in his works, some of which may be considered scholarly, Calvin stood out as primarily a pastor rather than a scholar.

1.8 Secondary Literature

There seems additionally to be a significant amount of recent literature on John Calvin that portrays him primarily as a pastor and not just a theologian. Some of the literature written in celebration of the quincentenary of Calvin made a significant effort to portray him chiefly as a pastor. Wright (2009:4-17), Ryken (2009), McGoldrick (2010:3-5) and Godfrey (2009:57-192), to name just a few, have all written about Calvin, focusing on him as a pastor. Perhaps one can also argue that most of the works written on Calvin concentrating on his word or preaching ministry such as that of Barnes (2011:37-112), Jones (2010:6-8) and a small section of Adam (1996:61-66)³, primarily portray him as a pastor. After all, as already noted, that is the primary way in which the pastor fulfilled his calling.

Perhaps the most telling moment of one's lifetime vocation is at the end of one's life and, in this regard, Fatio notes that Calvin, "Exhausted by the illness which had almost made him an invalid since the winter of 1558–1559, Calvin passed away May 27, 1564. He died as poor as he had lived, without any other title than that of pastor." (1986). Calvin was sickly for most of his life (Selderhuis, 2009:196) and Fatio draws attention to the fact that when he finally succumbed to one of his many illnesses (Selderhuis, 2009:196) all that was left of him was the title "pastor". Any basic study on Calvin from

² See subheading "On the Pastor and the Scholar" above.

³ Adam (1996:61-66) excellently outlines Calvin's word ministry through his writings.

primary and secondary sources, that judges him fairly, will concur with Fatio's ascribing this title to him as Wright (2009:4) has also remarked, "his fundamental occupation was as a shepherd of the flock of God" We should be perplexed as to why Calvin is hardly ever referred to by this title as Fatio (1986:1), Barnes (2011:37) and Wright (2009:4) postulate.

This portrayal of Calvin needs to take his evident intellectual acumen in his writings into consideration. Some of his works were scholarly because of Calvin's critical engagement with issues and the text of the Bible, an aptitude which he would have cultivated during his training as a lawyer (Parker, 2006:30-34; McGoldrick, 2010:3). Thus, the question of the influence of his scholarly aptitude in his pastoral ministry is pertinent to this study.

1.8.1 Friends and Foes

What makes the study of Calvin's role in the history of the church challenging are varying opinions of him that range from adoring him to abhorring him, as one article in *Christianity Today* (1986) put it. For instance, Dickson remarks that "Calvin was a warm hearted godly leader, preacher and pastor who agonised over the Scriptures and over the paradigm-breaking theology of which he was a pioneer" (2009:1). The editor of the *Faith in Focus* magazine which appeared in May 2010 placed this quote about Calvin in the editorial page: "... while a brilliant intellectual, [Calvin] was also a sympathetic pastor and caring friend who loved God and loved others, who, in turn, loved him." (cited in Walter, 2010:2)

These positive descriptions of Calvin contrasted with the negative ones give us a completely different picture. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ODCC) defined Calvin as, "the 'cruel' and 'the unopposed dictator of Geneva.'" (cited in *Christianity Today*, 1986) Hillar (cited in Dickson, 2009:1), one of Calvin's most vocal critics, gives a more detailed description, "Calvin in fact established a dictatorship, becoming a civil and religious dictator. Geneva was nicknamed Protestant Rome and Calvin himself - the Pope of the Reformation....Calvin introduced an absolute control of the private life of every citizen. In his doctrine, every man was wretched being not worthy of existence, a sinner and evil doer, 'trash' (une ordure)."

These descriptions of Calvin paint a very bleak picture of him and pose the challenge whether he can rightly be attributed the title pastor. It needs to be acknowledged that Calvin was not without any flaws, but also that these descriptions do not present a holistic view of him. Hillar's criticism of Calvin seems to be originating from one direction, that he murdered Servetus (Dickson, 2009:2), and does not appear to consider Calvin's life as a pastor of Geneva and the success of his labours that had a lasting impact in the church and in the world (George, 2009:1-10). Also, as an historian, Hillar should know that marring Calvin's image by adducing the murder of Servetus is a fallacy. It is common knowledge that Calvin was not the final authority in Servetus' case but the Genevan government, and there had been consensus among the Swiss churches and cities on what the outcome of Servetus' trial should be (Parker, 2006:152). Therefore, it is not a reasonable judgment to mar the whole ministry of Calvin with an incident over which he did not have much control. It must be remembered that the outcome of all those who were declared heretics was the sentence of being burnt at the stake and Calvin sought a less harsh execution for Servetus without success (Parker, 2009:152). What is interesting about Hillar is that he seems to defend all those who were Calvin's foes. In his paper on Bolsec⁴, he also painted a negative picture of Calvin in opposition to Bolsec (Hillar, 2002:1-2). This makes it difficult to appreciate Hillar's critiques of Calvin since they have the appearance of personal vendettas.

The ODCC and Hillar are also incorrect in that Calvin was the "unopposed dictator" of Geneva. It is known that Calvin was vehemently opposed in Geneva for most of his ministry, not just by the populace, but by some members of the government to the point of being banished from the city (Parker, 2006:73-90). If Calvin was an "unopposed dictator" then it can be postulated that he was extremely unsuccessful. What is also obvious in some of these descriptions is the contention with Calvin's theology and it appears that this is where most of the criticism of Calvin emanates. This is evident in Hillar's (in Dickson, 2009:1) vehemently negative comments about

⁴ Jerome Bolsec was a contemporary of Calvin who had fled France because of his Reformed convictions and became a medical doctor. Settling in Geneva, he became a physician to one of the families there. He admired Calvin for his theology but contended with him on the doctrine of predestination (Parker, 2006:141). Thus, through the influence of Calvin, he was banished from Geneva by the government. After Calvin died, Bolsec wrote a biography of him tarnishing his image (McMahon, 2013).

Calvin's doctrine of the depravity of humankind which some scholars have also expressed.

Calvin's theology was based on the interpretation of Scripture; he held such a high view of Scripture (Parker, 2006:102-103) that it can be asserted that any of his theology was based on his interpretation of the Scriptures. If Calvin's theology was based on his interpretation of the Scriptures, then the contention should be with the interpretation and not the character of the interpreter. Calvin's critics distort his image as a pastor who cared deeply for both the spiritual and the physical needs of others (Powlison, 2009).

1.8.2 Pastoral Concern for the Church

For this pastoral concern, Wright (2009:5) points out that one can look at the many theological treatises, church reformation and church order documents, the many letters, commentaries and sermons that bear the name and labours of Calvin, some of which were examined for this study. But because Calvin is probably known for his *magnum opus*, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, then the first work to examine, to be convinced that indeed, at heart, Calvin was a pastor and not just a cold, intellectual scholar, is the *Institutes* themselves. Wright is successful in highlighting Calvin's pastoral heart in the *Institutes*, and if one reads the *Institutes* with "Pastor Calvin" in mind, this heart becomes evident. And thus, it may be concluded that Wright's focus on Calvin's pastoral theology in the *Institutes* is not misplaced.

He begins by stating and explaining the opening statement in the *Institutes* which is that, according to Calvin (cited in Wright, 2009:5) "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves". If this is the framework with which Calvin himself operated, it is expected that the *Institutes* would be an appropriation of this framework and indeed according to Wright, this statement became the rubric that Calvin employed in the rest of the *Institutes* (2009:5). Wright goes on to demonstrate how Calvin did this, particularly in his pastoral vision, which concerns itself with the relationship between God and human beings and is apparent in the different parts of the *Institutes* (2009:6).

The purpose of the *Institutes* as stated by Calvin himself in the preface should also be considered. Parker (2006:53-56) argues that the purpose is twofold: The *Institutes* are

a defence of Protestant faith and an instruction in the Christians faith for the believers, as the title suggests, and therefore one should expect the *Institutes* to be pastoral if the latter is true. In support of this, Piper (2009:30) also points out that the *Institutes* were not just an academic exercise for Calvin, but a theological treatise for the sake of the Christians who were being persecuted for their faith.

Again, consideration should be given to Piper's (2009:32) and Fatio's (1986:1) remarks that Calvin's scholarly work, at least from the time he was appointed pastor, was an extension of, and served, his pastoral ministry. Therefore, one should expect the final edition of the *Institutes* published in 1559 (Piper, 2009:30), after about twenty-three years of Calvin having been a pastor, to be pastoral as Wright argues. Parker (2006:52) also argues that the first edition of the *Institutes* was also pastoral even although Calvin had not yet been appointed to that ministry at Geneva when this first edition was published in 1536. To buttress the pastoral nature of the *Institutes*, Fatio (1986:1) points out that Farel took an interest in Calvin, coercing him into pastoral ministry, because of his work on the *Institutes*. It would therefore not be unwarranted to conclude that Farel, who was already a pastor, saw another pastor behind the *Institutes*. He so desired for Calvin to join him in pastoral work in Geneva that he used fear to cause Calvin to succumb (Parker, 2006:75). Lack of desire to occupy the pastoral office is noteworthy evidence that an individual may not be wired for pastoral ministry as implied by Paul's instructions to Timothy on considering candidates for pastoral ministry (1 Tim. 3:1). But Farel seems to have overlooked that with Calvin as did Martin Bucer later in Strasbourg, who used a similar tactic to that of Farel (Parker, 2006:1).

1.9 Conclusion

Calvin is often portrayed as a distinguished Christian scholar whose scholarly contribution, for which he is famous, cannot be ignored, but he was a pastor and his scholarly work was an extension of his pastoral ministry. It could be said that he is a great example of a pastor; as Mohler asserts "every pastor is called to be a theologian" (2008:105) and shows from Church History how most theologians were also pastors; he points to Calvin as one of them. In fact, Mathis (2011:11), concluding Carson and Piper's *"The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor"*, goes beyond these and points to Paul and Jesus as the great examples in the Bible of pastors who were also

scholarly. This researcher is confident that John Calvin's pastoral ministry was hugely impacted in a positive way by his intellectual aptitude, setting him apart as a great example of an able pastor.

Chapter 2 The Academic Influence

2.1 Introduction

A study of John Calvin's childhood to adulthood background reveals an influential academic journey which is hard to ignore. His father, himself an educated man (Parker, 2006:17), secured an academic future for Calvin from a young age. Commenting on Calvin's academic background, Beza (1564:2) says, "Gérard [Calvin's father] being a person of no small judgment and prudence, was highly esteemed by most of the nobility of the district, and this was the reason why young Calvin was from a boy very liberally educated, though at his father's expense, in the family of the Mommors⁵, one of the most distinguished in that quarter." And it appears that Calvin himself was not an ordinary student, as McGoldrick (2010:3) points out: he demonstrated "intelligence and scholarly aptitude" from an early age.

As a young man, Calvin's life was dedicated to his studies: he went from one academic institution to another and studied widely, acquiring knowledge even in theology (Parker, 2006:28). Although Calvin did not end up officially studying theology as the plan had originally been (Beza, 1564:2) the knowledge he gained throughout his academic studies would prove to be essential in his future vocation as a minister of a church.

As an adult, Calvin's intellectual acumen was wonderfully captured by the designation "The Theologian" by his contemporary, Melanchthon. It was "At the Conference at Worms in 1541, overwhelmed by Calvin's learning and theological acumen, [that] he [Melanchthon] called him [Calvin] The Theologian" says Parker (1954:61). And ever since, Calvin has become known by this title (Sproul, 2009).

Calvin's academic background is very significant in the study of the life of the Reformer. Scholars of Calvin cannot and should not omit this prominent part of his life. In the study of Calvin's theological contribution as an extension of his pastoral ministry it is even more significant as it will reveal Calvin as academically proficient. But more significantly for our study, it will establish the basis on which Calvin's ministry flourished academically. Calvin's standing as a theologian, should be understood from his pastoral vocation. Consequently, in this chapter the focus is primarily on outlining

⁵ This is the same family that is mainly referred to as the Montmors in the rest of this Chapter. The spelling of the family name seems to vary depending on the author.

his academic background, which dominates most of Calvin's life even as a pastor, not at the expense of his pastoral ministry but as an extension of it.

2.2 Historical Context

Calvin was born during the 1500's – an epoch of high tension in the history of the church. Martin Luther, the German Reformer, had a few years after Calvin's birth initiated an event that would change the shape of the Roman Catholic Church forever. This was the renowned event where Luther challenged what he had come to perceive as unbiblical church tradition by nailing his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517 (Gonzalez, 2006:22). The results of Luther's action were groups of dissenters from the Roman Catholic Church that still exist to this day. Parker (2006:9-16) in his introduction to Calvin's biography outlines how the Reformation of the church then was looming from as early as the 1400's, but that it was Luther who would take the final step that caused one of the biggest upheavals ever experienced in the Western church.

The intellectual commitment of the Reformers is evident throughout their theology and practice. For instance, Luther himself held a doctorate in theology, he lectured and wrote many tracts and theological treatises under the banner of the Reformation (Gonzalez, 2006:29-37) and those who would follow him were also inclined to academe. Calvin would later join this band of intellectual Reformers and become one of the most influential of the Reformers who shaped the Protestant movement through his intellectual influence.

In 1509 on the 10th of July, a few years before Luther's confrontation with the church, Calvin was born. He grew up in "...Noyon, a small town in Picardy in northern France" (Selderhuis, 2009:9). Although in his first biography of Calvin, Beza dates his birth on the 27th of July of the same year, scholars of Calvin such as Godfrey (2009:7), Parker (2006:18) and Selderhuis (2009:9) agree that the correct day is the 10th of the same month. Nothing much is known of Calvin's family except a few details that were recorded as a result of the conflict with the church experienced by his father and his brother Charles (Selderhuis, 2009:9-10). We also know that his mother's name was Jean le Franc and that in total, he had six siblings who rarely feature in any of his biographies or autobiographies (Selderhuis, 2009:10).

Calvin's academic commitment, which would be later useful to the Reformation, started at an early age. His elementary education was undertaken by a private tutor with the children of a noble family with which he was acquainted from childhood, the Montmors (Parker, 2006:20). In his dedicatory letter to the Montmor boys, Calvin said, "I owe you all that I am and have.... As a boy I was brought up in your home and was initiated in my studies with you. Hence I owe to your noble family my first training in life and letters." (in Parker, 2006:20.) If Calvin's reference to being 'initiated in his studies' with the Montmors means he shared a tutor with them as suggested by Parker (2006:20), then it is probable that in this brief dedicatory letter to the Montmors we have a glimpse of the system of educating children at the time, which was through private tutoring. The implications of this are that education was mostly for the elite. Judging by the status of their family in the society, which was that of the nobility (Selderhuis, 2009:12), the Montmors were among the elite and could afford a private tutor whom they could share with Calvin, although at his father's expense (Parker, 2006:20).

Therefore, from an early age Calvin received the privilege of being educated, something that most children growing up in his time did not have, and in addition enjoying such close attention from this tutor who one may surmise would have been one of the best available, as one would have expected a noble family to employ. Masson's comment about Calvin at this stage of his academic background is telling of his progress, "His childhood was spent in his own district among boys of his own age under a pedagogue and master of scholars; but he outstripped the others, thanks to the quick intelligence and excellent memory." (in Parker, 2006:19.) Thus, from an early age Calvin was privileged to be educated under a tutor and excelled in his studies.

Another phase in Calvin's academic background was the preparatory phase to study for the arts which he also undertook through another tutor (Selderhuis, 2009:12). But this did not last long since only after a few months he was admitted to Collège de la Marche, discussed further below. Not long after this he was transferred to Collège de Montaigu (Selderhuis, 2009:12-13) where he remained until graduating to attend the University of Orléans and then later moved to Bourges (Parker, 2006:30-52). The arts degree was considered as preparation to study in one of the main faculties, that of theology, medicine or law (Parker, 2006:21). Again, in his preparatory studies for the arts, we are made aware of Calvin's intellectual progress. Beza (in Parker, 2006:21)

commented, "...he (Calvin) so profited (from his preparatory studies to the arts) that he left his fellow-students behind and was promoted to dialectics and the study of the other so-called arts." At yet another early stage of his academic background, it appears that Calvin was proving himself to be an exceptional student.

It was at the age of fourteen with the intention of preparing for the priesthood (Dickson, 2009:1) that Calvin entered Collège de la Marche, one of the colleges of the University of Paris (Selderhuis, 2009:12). The age at which Calvin entered university is revealing of his progress in his studies. The fact that Calvin entered university at such an early age could easily be attributed to his intellectual gifting as this might seem unusual. But before one reaches that conclusion, at least two possibilities must be carefully considered. Firstly, that fourteen years was a normal age for prospective students to enter university because of the education system of the time, and therefore, it would not have been surprising at all to Calvin's contemporaries. Secondly, that Calvin was exceptionally gifted academically as was evident in his preliminary education, meant that he was promoted to something that was possible but uncommon. These two possibilities indicate what kind of a student Calvin was and would become.

Selderhuis seems to support the first option. He says, "That Calvin was only fourteen years old at time [when he matriculated at the University of Paris] says nothing one way or the other about his intellectual abilities. It was not unusual to enter the university at fourteen, and Calvin, in fact, may even be said to have begun a little on the late side." (2009:12.) Thus, according to Selderhuis, it was normal in Calvin's time to enter university at that age; hence this should not puzzle contemporary readers in any way. The fact that Calvin may even be considered as late in entering university makes it even harder, if Selderhuis' conclusion is right, to attribute his entry to university at a young age to his intellectual abilities.

Parker on the other hand, in his brief description of this stage of Calvin's education seems to suggest the second option. Commenting on why Calvin's older brother Charles, when he was fourteen was not considered for university, probably by his father according to the context of the comment, Parker says, "We may infer that he was not particularly intelligent." (2006:19). Parker's inference suggests that Calvin was considered for university by his father because he was indeed intelligent. This becomes obvious when he goes on to contrast Charles and Calvin intellectually,

pointing out that according to tradition, Calvin was considered intelligent from a young age (Parker, 2006:19) so that, according to Parker, he was considered for university by his father. Whatever position one holds, what both Selderhuis and Parker affirm is that Calvin showed signs of high intellectual ability from a young age and his education helped develop this.

According to Dickson (2009:1), while in Paris, Calvin studied Latin and French, classical writers and early theologians and in 1528, he graduated with his Master of Arts degree. This curriculum is what would mould Calvin into what he would later become, a scholar in one of the three main fields of study: theology, law and medicine. Theology was Calvin's goal until his father changed his mind and made him study law (Parker, 2006:30). Thus, Calvin's early education was the initial stages of his training as a scholar and he was excelling in this preliminary training; this would become significant in his further studies and his future ministry.

2.3 Advanced Education

Calvin then progressed to advanced education in law at the University of Orléans and Bourges. Parker (2006:30-52) deals at length with this part of Calvin's life. Of note, here is that Calvin's advanced education forms a significant part of his training as a biblical scholar even though he was not necessarily being trained in theology⁶. Ryken and McGoldrick bring this to our attention. According to Ryken (2009), Calvin's "commitment to scholarship [as pastor] came naturally, since Calvin had been trained as a legal scholar before he gave his life to Christ and entered the ministry." McGoldrick (2010:3) also maintains that, "By the time of his conversion, Calvin had become a proficient scholar in classical literature and law—preparation which equipped him well to become a theologian." Calvin was not formally trained as a theologian but rather as a lawyer; thus, Ryken and McGoldrick rightly attribute Calvin's proficiency in biblical scholarship to his training in law. But what was it about his training in law which ensured that Calvin would become a proficient biblical scholar?

⁶ Parker (2006:33) notes that in the law programme in Orléans students were expected to familiarise themselves with certain aspects of theology such as early church doctrine, particularly Christology and the early history of doctrine, and therefore we can conclude that Calvin received his first theological training during his time in Orléans.

Perhaps it was the structure of the law programme. Without going into much detail as Parker does, the curriculum of his legal training ensured that Calvin was trained in all aspects of the Roman law that were known at that time (2006:31-32), some aspects of theology (2006:33), in linguistics and in historical criticism (2006:32&38). From the details outlined by Parker, it seems that the programme was designed such that by the time the students completed their studies they would be proficient scholars. To put it in another way, Calvin's law studies offered an intense training programme in scholarship. This should not be a surprise because this phase of Calvin's education is equivalent to contemporary doctoral studies (Parker, 2006:34).

Calvin seems to have excelled during his training as a lawyer. During his time in Orléans he lectured other students (Parker, 2006:33). This may have been because it was part of the programme at the University of Orléans for licentiates to lecture as part of their training, as Parker (2006:34) points out. However, Beza's account makes us consider another possibility. He says [that] "Calvin went therefore to Orléans for the purpose of prosecuting his studies in civil law, which was taught by Peter de l'Etoile, the most distinguished of all the French civilians; and his progress in a short time was so surprising that, as he frequently supplied the chairs of the professors themselves, he was esteemed a teacher rather than a scholar." (Beza, 1964:2.) According to Beza, as a student, Calvin was considered a teacher of other students because he was academically exceptional. Parker goes on to point this out, "Nevertheless, it seems that Jean was one of the outstanding students, in that he seems both to have lectured *ordinarie* for some considerable time and also to have been a natural choice for professors seeking a temporary substitute – something that the act of 1512 had regulated." (2006:34.)

Calvin's first attempt at a scholarly publication was a commentary on Seneca's *de clementia* which proved unsuccessful, something that would not have been expected of an exceptional student; even Calvin was disappointed by its outcome (Selderhuis, 2009:24). It can be questioned therefore, whether Calvin was such an outstanding scholar since his first scholarly work failed. Although it is true that Calvin's *de clementia* was not very well received by the scholarly world, the fact that he even wrote and published it sheds light on the training he had received in law. Parker remarks that in *de clementia*, Calvin "shows himself a true child of the new learning, with his use of

Greek, his linguistic approach, his attention to the context, his too careful, something brittle style, his heaping up of authorities” (2006:45-46) and that all this learning can be traced back to his training in law. Moreover, if Calvin’s scholarly aptitude is judged simply by the failure of his “first” work then the rest of his work is being overlooked, like the first edition of the *Institutes* which was a major success (Selderhuis, 2009:45-46). Therefore, through his advanced education, it is apparent that Calvin was trained to be a scholar: he indeed became a proficient one and this would significantly impact on his pastoral ministry.

2.4 Ambitions

Through his ambitions that he acknowledges in some of his works we are also made aware of Calvin’s scholarly acumen. Although Parker (2006:20) points out that it was customary for Calvin to speak little of himself in his work, he left enough details in his works to know what his future plans and desires were. Two particular ambitions of his are of interest for this study: the ambition to study theology, which was short-lived because of his father’s decision (Selderhuis, 2009:14-15), and the ambition to privately study the Scriptures and publish, which was also short-lived because of his own decision to stay in Geneva, having been coerced to do so by Farel (Fatio, 1986:1).

2.4.1 Destined for Theology

As already mentioned, when Calvin entered the University of Paris, it was with the intention of preparing to study theology for the priesthood. This goal was what his father desired for him until he fell out with the church and decided that the priesthood was not financially viable for livelihood as Beza (1564:2) points out. It may also be that Calvin’s father changed his mind about his son studying theology to become a priest because of the unrest in the church at the time because of the Protestant Reformation, as argued by Parker (2006:30). Whatever the reason may have been for Calvin’s father to alter his mind, it is known that he had initially wanted him to study theology from a young age (Parker, 2006:30) and this is the ambition that Calvin came to own, because after his father died, he felt free to pursue this passion. This is evident in Calvin’s letter to Melchoir Wolmar, where he wrote, “My father sent me to study law, and the death of my father once again turned me aside from that road.” (in Selderhuis, 2009:15.). By “turning aside from that road” Calvin could not have been referring to

abandoning his legal studies since he had already completed them by the time of his father's death. Rather, it may be concluded that he turned aside from practising law to devote his whole life to pursuing informal theological studies, since he did not immediately become a pastor. Thus, from the pursuit of his ambition to study theology after his father's death, Calvin proved himself to have been zealous for biblical scholarship from the beginning: thus, it is not a surprise that this zeal occupied the rest of his life (McGoldrick, 2010:3-4).

2.4.2 Pursuit of Private Study

No other words capture Calvin's ambition to study in quietness than his very own:

Farel, who burned with an extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel, immediately learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies, for which I wished to keep myself free from other pursuits, and finding that he gained nothing by entreaties, he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquillity of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the necessity was so urgent. By this imprecation I was so stricken with terror, that I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken. (in Piper, 2009:31.)

Calvin was referring to the event when he was on his way to Strasbourg with the intention of "devoting himself to private studies" and making a detour into Geneva because of political conflict on the normal route to the former city, though the fiery Farel, knowing he was in town, managed to persuade him to stay and minister in Geneva (Selderhuis, 2009:50-54). Piper summarises Calvin's ambition when he remarks, "He wanted the enjoyment of literary ease so he could promote the Reformed faith as a literary scholar." (2009:21.) Hence Calvin had no intentions to enter full-time pastoral ministry and it could be said that he was coerced into it. His ambition was to be a scholar of the Bible, an ambition he would pursue for his whole life, but this time as a pastor.

2.5 Scholarship in Calvin's Time

To understand the nature of the influence of Calvin's academic background in his ministry, it is noteworthy that scholarship during his time had significant differences to the scholarship of subsequent generations. For instance, the emphases on objectivity in scholarship that gave birth to detached scholarship was only fully developed after Calvin's time. In his article on the relationship between exegesis and contextuality,

Hans de Wit (2008:8) argued that the development of detachment in scholarship was a result of the Enlightenment. De Wit's (2008:3-4) article was a contribution to the discussion between the Global South⁷ scholars and Western scholars on the role of appropriation in biblical hermeneutics. In making his argument, de Wit used the analogy of marriage to show where the break—or to use the term of the marriage analogy, the divorce—in history happened between the conventional technique of hermeneutics, which took appropriation for granted in biblical interpretation and the current Western method of hermeneutics, which seeks to be detached for the sake of objectivity in biblical scholarship (de Wit, 2008:7). This is what de Wit said about where the divorce happened,

The cracks in the marriage begin to be noticeable at the end of the Renaissance. A definitive divorce takes place during the Aufklärung where the secret of 'history' is discovered and reason and rationality become arbiters of meaning. The multi-colouredness, the exotic, arbitrary and bizarre in appropriation processes are experienced as problematic. (2008:7.)

The Aufklärung⁸ is the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century intellectual movement in Europe "...that sought to enthrone human reason as the final arbiter of truth; the ultimate source of human progress." (Newby, 2009:38.) De Wit's argument was that in the quest to enthrone human reason during this period, the result was complete objectivity in biblical scholarship. De Wit's remark in his historical overview of the relationship between exegesis and appropriation in hermeneutics revealed how scholars of the sixteenth century, including Calvin, would have approached the biblical text: "No matter how much emphasis was laid on the primacy of the *sensus litteralis* of the texts in the Reformation, Luther, Calvin and others in their commentaries continuously forged bonds between the old text and the personal new situation." (de Wit, 2008:8.) One only needs to read the commentaries of Luther and Calvin to see this. Although Calvin does allude to scholarly snobbishness among his contemporaries, it would be unwarranted to place Calvin in the category of the detached scholars as some of his critiques have (Godfrey, 2009:7-9). Rather, it appears that biblical scholarship in Calvin's time was practiced in a way that would aid ministry rather than hinder it as we see in his ministry.

⁷ "The Global South consists of the nations of Africa, Central and Latin America, and most of Asia." (Snyman, 2011:33).

⁸ Aufklärung is a German word for Enlightenment (Snyman, 2011:73).

2.5.1 Calvin's Scholarship an Extension of his Pastoral Ministry

Calvin cannot be situated in the category of the detached scholar because his scholarship became an extension of his pastoral ministry. This argument is advanced and alluded to by several authors. Mathis (2010:20) remarks, "He [Calvin] simply would not — *could* not — have done what he did had he been tucked away in studious solitude, trying to maximize his isolation from the world and its fallenness. Quarantined from the church, he would have been little good to her." Mathis makes reference to Calvin's ambition (as previously mentioned) to spend some time in private studies, which was soon thwarted when he was persuaded to stay and minister in Geneva. Whether Mathis' conclusion, that Calvin would not have been productive as a scholar had his plans to study privately succeeded, is accurate or not, it is noteworthy that he regards Calvin's scholarly productivity, at least as a pastor, as possible only because he was in the ministry. Piper appears to agree with Mathis; commenting on Calvin's decision to stay in Geneva, he also related it to his productivity in the ministry, "Never again would Calvin work in what he called the 'tranquillity of . . . studies.' From then on, every page of the forty-eight volumes of books and tracts and sermons and commentaries and letters that he wrote would be hammered out on the anvil of pastoral responsibility" (2009:32.). Piper affirms that Calvin did most of his scholarly work because he was a pastor. The rest of the editions of the *Institutes*, his commentaries on almost the whole Bible, his treatises and some of his scholarly letters were all written by Calvin as a pastor (Parker, 2006:132-136). From this it may be concluded that what was thwarted in Calvin's ambition was the "private study" as a biblical scholar, not his scholarly aptitude nor his productivity as a scholar. And thus, in researching Calvin his pastoral ministry cannot be separated from his scholarly ministry.⁹

⁹ To my mind this outline of Calvin's labours by Beza gives a good idea of how Calvin's scholarship cannot be separated from his daily labours of pastoral ministry: "The following statement of facts will enable us to form a judgment of his ordinary labours. In every fortnight he preached one whole week; thrice every week he delivered lectures; on the Thursdays he presided in the meetings of the Presbytery; on the Fridays he collated and expounded the Holy Scriptures to what we term the congregation. He was engaged in illustrating many of the sacred books by commentaries of very uncommon learning; on some occasions he was employed in answering the adversaries of religion, and at other times wrote to correspondents from every part of Europe concerning subjects of great importance. Every attentive reader of his numerous productions will be astonished to find one weak little man able to accomplish so many and such great labours." (1564:10).

2.6 Primary Vocation

In the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, Calvin spelt out what he viewed as his primary vocation. He referred to his ministry in Geneva as his “vocation”, “Then loosed from my vocation and free [to follow my own desire], I decided to live quietly as a private individual. But that most distinguished minister of Christ, Martin Bucer, dragged me back again to a new post with the same curse which Farel had used against me. Terrified by the example of Jonah which he had set before me, I continued the work of teaching.” (1557:54.) Firstly, by being “loosed” he was referring to his banishment from Geneva where we also know from what he had said earlier that in this city his vocation was as a pastor (Calvin, 1557:54). Secondly, the desire that he wanted to follow was his scholarship, which he had intended to pursue from the beginning (Calvin, 1557:53), hence he was not referring to his scholarship as his vocation. Thirdly, we know that in Strasbourg Calvin was appointed pastor by Bucer (Parker, 2006:91-92), and here he called this vocation of his “another post”. Fourthly, according to Calvin, teaching was also the work of the pastor (1559:1054); he said he continued the “work of teaching” referring to his pastoral work.

His reply to Farel when the latter asked him to write a commentary on Genesis is also revealing of what Calvin viewed as his primary vocation, not as a scholar, but as a pastor which he termed his “present calling”:

As to my observation on Genesis, if the Lord shall grant me longer life and leisure, perhaps I will set myself about that work, although I do not expect to have many hearers. This is my especial end and aim, to serve my generation; and for the rest, if, in my *present calling*, an occasional opportunity offers itself, I shall endeavour to improve it for those who come after us. I have a mind to set about writing several things, but as my wife is now in ill health, not without danger, my attention is otherwise engaged (cited in Godfrey, 2009:8.)

Summing up the often neglected and yet significant pastoral vocation of Calvin, Fatio recalls, “Exhausted by the illness which had almost made him an invalid since the winter of 1558–1559, Calvin passed away May 27, 1564. He died as poor as he had lived, without any other title than that of pastor.” (1986). Calvin was sickly for most of his life (Selderhuis, 2009:196); Fatio points to the fact that when he finally succumbed to one of his many illnesses (Selderhuis, 2009:196) all that was left of Calvin was the title, “pastor”. And therefore, it seems that if one is to do justice to the study of Calvin,

they will acknowledge as Fatio asserts, that Calvin's was primarily a pastor: as Wright remarked, "his fundamental occupation was as a shepherd of the flock of God" (2009:4.)

2.7 Conclusion

Calvin's background was obviously dominated by his academic pursuits but no less by his pastoral ones after he was appointed minister in Geneva, as his theological contribution to the church was a significant part of his ministry. Thus, it may be concluded that Calvin's academic background played a significant role in the way he practiced his pastoral ministry for the rest of his life rather than being his dominant occupation.

Chapter 3 The Pastoral Office

3.1 Introduction

In their desire to reform the church, the Reformers spent a significant amount of time redefining the order of offices that govern it, that is, the different leadership roles as they perceived were stipulated in the Scriptures. For instance, the order that Calvin put in place in Geneva upon his return was an adaptation of that with which he had come into contact during his time in Strasbourg, a city which had already aligned itself to the Reformation under the leadership of Martin Bucer (Selderhuis, 2009:87-95). The reformed order of such offices became a necessity because Protestant churches were beginning to spring up as the resistance to reform escalated, resulting in persecution of the Protestants by the established Roman Catholic Church.

It was crucial for the Protestants to rethink their church leadership structures because the established church had already defined its roles and hierarchy in its leadership structures, having the Pope as the ultimate Vicar of Christ on earth and the final authority on matters of life and religion (Long, 1998:52). This was one of the Roman Catholic Church tenets that the Reformers highly contested. Understanding Calvin's concept of the pastoral office in Reformed terminology is essential for grasping the contention between the established church and the Reformers' view on final or ultimate authority. This provides the context in which Calvin operated and theologised. He spent a considerable portion of his works, the *Institutes* and works pertaining to the inner working of the church, defining the pastoral office over and against the position held by the established church.

Thus, the beginning of this section is a discussion of the opposing views on ultimate authority held by the established church and by the Reformers. Close attention is paid to the view of John Wycliffe who, as one of the main forerunners to the Reformation who flourished a couple of centuries before Luther and Calvin, is a harbinger of the views of Luther, the father of the Reformation and Calvin, the theologian of the Reformation. The aim of the discussion is, as mentioned above, to comprehend the differences on the issue of authority that existed between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants.

Having established the foundation for the Reformed doctrine of ultimate authority, the discussion then moves on to discuss Calvin's interpretation of Scripture concerning

the pastoral office. It is assumed in this discussion that Calvin's view represents the mainstream Reformed view on the pastoral office.

3.2 Ultimate Authority

3.2.1 The Roman Catholic Church view

Prior to the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church had insisted that the final authority in matters of life and religion is the Vicar of Christ, the Pope (Long, 1998:52). The Reformers maintained that this view represented the desire for power and control. Reeves (2009:11-12) remarks that according to the Reformers the said Church postulated that a successor of the Pope was a successor of Peter the Apostle of Jesus who was appointed the father of the church when Jesus said to him in Matthew 16:18, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." With his name meaning rock it was taken that Peter was the foundation of the church and that anyone who led it should be one who is in the order of Peter and would himself become the Pope, that is, the father of the church (Reeves, 2009:11).

It should be noted here that some theologians believe the understanding of the above verse as the Catholics interpret it is erroneous (Tasker, 1961:162; France, 1989:244-251; Morris, 1992:422-425; Wilkins, 2004:561-565). The verse seems to imply that "Peter will play a foundational role in the establishment of the church" and not in being the father of the church (Wilkins, 2004:562). This is evident in Acts as Peter becomes a prominent figure; there does not seem to be an issue of succession concerning his role in the early church (France, 1989:244-251).

The focus of the discussion at this point however, remains the hierarchy of authority in the Catholic teaching. Of great concern for the Reformers was that the Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth had authority to add doctrines, which could not be traced to nor defended by the Scriptures, into the life of the church which were accepted as dogma. Reeves' (2009:11-12) comment on the role of the Pope according to Catholicism sheds some light on the power the pope possessed; "Without Father Pope there could be no Church; without Mother Church there could be no salvation. The pope was held to be Christ's vicar (representative) on earth, and as such, he was the channel through whom all of God's grace flowed. He had the power to ordain bishops, who in turn could ordain priests; and together, they, the clergy, were the ones with the authority to turn the taps of grace."

Thus, the Catholic teaching on ultimate authority was a major influence on how the established church in the sixteenth century, during the Reformation, was so structured. It is not surprising then that one of the contentions of the Reformers against the Catholic Church was that of the issue of authority. Was the Pope the final authority or was it the Scriptures, as the Reformers insisted? An understanding of the Reformed view on this sheds light on Calvin's position in his order of church offices which had the local church pastor playing a more significant role in the life of the church than the Pope.

3.2.2 The Reformed view

The Reformed view on ultimate authority was strongly espoused by John Wycliffe, the fourteenth century English theologian and pastor who gained himself the nickname "the morning star of the Reformation" because of his significant contribution in shaping the tenets of the Reformation through his works and deeds (Schaff, 1882:39). Although it may be argued that Wycliffe was not the first one to hold to such a view on the Scriptures as is outlined below, it is evident that the Reformers were influenced in their perspective by what he had long since argued over against the interpretation of the established church of his day (Newby, 2009:56). Therefore, an analysis of Wycliffe's views is presented in this discussion of the Reformed teaching on the ultimate authority.

Wycliffe's view was that Scripture is this authority because it is the very Word of God and therefore the ultimate source of God's will for humanity (Long, 1998:51-52). But over against what authority was the Bible the "ultimate" one according to Wycliffe? Trevelyan, outlining the tenets of Wycliffe's supposedly "new religion" in fourteenth century England, pointed out [that] "The positive basis which Wycliffe set up, in place of absolute Church authority, was the Bible." (1925:181.) Thus, according to Trevelyan, Wycliffe placed Scripture as the ultimate authority in contradistinction to the Church and its head, the Pope (Long, 1998:52). This was a very radical view to hold and yet this would be the characteristic of those who would follow his teachings (Trevelyan, 1925:181-182). And indeed, in the Reformers a similar kind of attitude was noticeable; for instance, Luther maintained that every Christian had a right to interpret Scripture since it, not the Pope, was the final authority (Reeves, 2009:42-43). And Calvin, in the first volume of the *Institutes*, spent a significant amount of time

establishing the authority of Scripture which became the foundation of the rest of what he went on to say in the rest of this work (Calvin, 1559:69-70).

If the Church had always been perceived as the ultimate authority, what led Wycliffe and the Reformers to reject that conventional idea and place Scripture above the Church? According to Spinka (1953:15) it was necessary for Wycliffe to ground his theology upon the higher authority of Scripture, since for him to effectively and successfully criticise the Pope, who was considered the highest authority in the church, he had to appeal to an even higher authority. Hence by doing so, Wycliffe would gain himself a powerful weapon to criticise the Church because now everyone, including the church, would have to answer to Scripture. The high view that Wycliffe held of Scripture is apparent in his works. For instance, in his treatise on the Eucharist, his arguments against the Church's practice of the Eucharist were based on "sense, reason, the holy doctors and Scripture" but even then, he made it clear that among these, Scripture was the final authority (Wycliffe, 1379:60-88). Vaughan (1973:248) also points out that Wycliffe never abandoned the scholarly methods of reasoning which substantiated arguments by appealing to sense, reason and to different authorities, but to Wycliffe, the Scripture was the highest authority of all.

On an interesting note, Leff, who was not at all sympathetic to Wycliffe or the Reformation, highlights his view of Scripture as the central doctrine in Wycliffe's teachings. He wrote, "The centre of Wycliffe's outlook—and heresy—has usually been seen in his exalting of the Bible at the expense of the Church, or at least its traditions." (Leff, 2002:152). He went on to point out how this doctrine became the basis for the sixteenth century Reformers' doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* (Leff, 2002:152). But to Leff this high view of the Scripture held by Wycliffe and the Reformers was not positive. He argued that this view led Wycliffe to reject the authority of the church and try to overthrow it with his heretical teachings (Leff, 2002:143-180).

Was Wycliffe's view, and subsequently that of the Reformers, propaganda used as a vehicle to rebel against the established teachings of the church? MacFarlane's insistence that, "To exalt the authority of the Bible was only one-half of Wycliffe's purpose; the other was to depress that of the church which was misguided enough to reject his teaching." (MacFarlane 1972:78), seems to imply this. However, a close analysis of MacFarlane's statement should not necessarily lead to such a conclusion.

It might be true that Wycliffe may have wanted to diminish the authority of the church by elevating that of Scripture but this does not necessarily make his intentions malicious, if indeed the church was as misguided as McFarlane suggests.

Firstly, Wycliffe did not claim to be an innovator of this doctrine of the ultimate authority of Scripture but simply an advocate of a view of Scripture that was already being believed and urged. In this view, “he professed himself to be a disciple of Marsiglio of Padua, William of Ockham, William of St. Amour, and Richard FitzRalph” (Spinka, 1953:23). McFarlane (1972:78) points this out, as does Leff who is adamant to prove that, “Wycliffe’s veneration of the Bible, it is held, was nothing new apart from the fervour with which he expressed it.” (2002:152-153.) There is minimal or no evidence to suggest that all those who came before Wycliffe also intended to harm the church with their heretical teachings by advocating a higher view of Scripture, but instead the contemporary sources show that they intended to reform it from within, as Wycliffe and the Reformers also desired (McFarlane, 1972:71-73).

Secondly, there is the view that Wycliffe and the Reformers’ view is consistent with what the Scriptures themselves teach. For instance, Paul urging Timothy to hold firmly to the teaching of the Scripture, as opposed to the false teachers who were departing from it, said to him, “All Scripture is God-breathed [inspired by God] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Laansma (2009:197) makes a strong case for this translation and interpretation of this verse:

The key word is the term translated “inspired by God.” This translates the adjective *theopneustos* [2315, 2535], which appears here for the first time in Greek literature (BDAG 449–450; Quinn and Wacker 2000:749–750); it may have been coined by Paul. Parallel language was used by Philo (e.g., *On the Decalogue* 35; *On the Confusion of Tongues* 44) and Josephus (*Against Apion* 1.37). To say that Scripture is inspired is to say that its words are God-breathed (a more literal translation); it is God’s own personal speech breathed out by God (cf. Heb 4:12–13; 2 Pet 1:20–21; also Num 24:2; Hos 9:7).

If “all” Scripture is indeed breathed out by God, which means Scripture is God’s very own word as argued by Laansma, then it would suffice that Scripture is the ultimate authority and not the Pope as the Reformers argued.

Thus, the Reformed view of Scripture as ultimate was not a novel idea but a view held long before Wycliffe. This view is consistent with the Word of God as this researcher understands it and is the foundational doctrine of the “Sola Scriptura” principle of the sixteenth century Reformation, which became the basis on which Calvin would define the new order of offices in the church.

3.3 Defining Pastor

Having addressed the context in which the Reformers operated and the foundation on which they based their theology, this allows one to appreciate Calvin’s view on the pastoral office more fully. The focus of this section is to define pastor and what that office entailed according to Calvin. Calvin was closely involved in the practical details of the ministry in Geneva as part of his pastoral duties. Parker (1954:87) points out that “all in all, for the ten years, 1550–1559, for which we have a register, he [Calvin] took about two hundred and seventy weddings and fifty baptisms.” Mathis (2010:22) in *With Calvin in the Theatre of God: the Glory of Christ and Everyday Life*, points out that,

Relating God to everything did not mainly summon Calvin the scholar to retreat, but Calvin the pastor to advance, to take forward God’s revelation into the everyday realities of cradle and grave, weddings and funerals, providential crossings along the road, home visits, appointments, classes, sermon preparation, meetings, family devotions, and daily chores.

Thus, Calvin saw the whole of life transformed by the Word of God; he became the example of what this looked like. The above quote demonstrates that to him; the inevitable consequence of the Word of God was transformation of society rather than merely a message that should be preached. And as one looks closely at the events in his life, especially considering the stern opposition that he faced in Geneva from the government and the populace because of his reforms (Parker, 2006:124-139) one can conclude that possibly the transformation that he was concerned with is not the transformation that the Genevans were looking for. However, this does not necessarily detract from letting Calvin speak for himself when it comes to the pastoral office.

3.3.1 Calvin on the Pastoral Office

Although some of Calvin’s commentaries and treatises offer a very clear picture of what Calvin believed a pastor to be, Wright (2009:5) insists [that] the best source for Calvin’s theology of pastoral ministry is the *Institutes*:

And we also see Calvin's pastoral emphasis in his magnum opus, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, for which Calvin is most famous. When we remember that *institutio* meant "instruction" for Calvin and remember that Calvin's first audience in this book was not seminary students but rather Protestant pastors and laypeople—as is shown by Calvin's own translations of the *Institutes* [sic] out of Latin into French so that the beleaguered French Protestants could read it—we get a firm clue that this greatest of all Protestant reformational treatises is intensely pastoral.

Concerning how Calvin defined pastor: In the *Institutes*, particularly Book Four, Calvin (1559:1011-1521) he used the terms pastors and shepherds synonymously. In the Bible, the word "pastor" is a synonym of the word "shepherd." This is evident in Ephesians 4:11, where the word shepherd (ποιμὲνας in Greek) is used in reference to the office of what is known as pastor (Stott, 1979:163). Thus, to Calvin a pastor was a shepherd of God's church.

Calvin also wrote extensively in Book Four of the *Institutes* on the duties of the pastor (Wright, 2009:9). According to him, the function of the pastor was "to proclaim the gospel and to administer the sacraments." (1559:1059.). This proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments could be summed up as feeding the flock of Jesus:

For Christ commanded that stewards of his gospel and sacraments be ordained, not that sacrificers be installed. He gave a command to preach the gospel [Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15] and feed the flock [John 21:15], not to sacrifice victims. (1559:1058.)

To him, the office of the pastor, over against that of the Roman Catholic view, was not as a priest who sacrifices on behalf of others but a shepherd who feeds the flock of Jesus. Calvin in his definition of the pastor and his duties seems to have been recalling the story of Jesus' third encounter with his disciples after his resurrection in John 21 (John 21:14). While some of his disciples were out fishing, probably wondering what they should be doing now that their adventure with their Lord seemed to have come to an end, Jesus appeared to them. Having fed his disciples a breakfast meal after his resurrection, Jesus turned to his disciple Peter and said,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love

me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17.)

Carson (1991:675) argues that this encounter described Jesus restoring Peter as one of his disciples after he had denied him three times and, in so doing, he appointed him to the office of a pastor. Three times Jesus asked Peter; he responded in the affirmative thrice and in each of these, Jesus responded to Peter with the command to look after his flock. More precisely, then, according to Jesus in John 21, a pastor is a shepherd who feeds his flock.

Peter seems to have been recalling this incident in 2 Peter 5, when he said,

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:² *shepherd the flock of God* [ποιμάνετε] that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Calvin maintained that the source of instruction through which the pastor was to perform this task was the Word of God:

"Here, then, is the sovereign power with which the pastors of the church, by whatever name they be called, ought to be endowed. That is that they may dare boldly to do all things by God's Word; may compel all worldly power, glory, wisdom, and exaltation to yield to and obey his majesty; supported by his power, may command all from the highest even to the last; may build up Christ's household and cast down Satan's; may feed the sheep and drive away the wolves; may instruct and exhort the teachable; may accuse, rebuke, and subdue the rebellious and stubborn; may bind and loose; finally, if need be, may launch thunderbolts and lightning, *but do all things in God's Word.*" (1559:115.)

Thus, it can be said that according to Calvin's theology and his interpretation of the Scripture that a pastor is the shepherd of the flock of Jesus whose main function was to feed Jesus' sheep by the Word of God. As his pastoral ministry is evaluated in the subsequent chapters Calvin's definition of the pastoral office will be examined. To fully grasp Calvin's stance, it will be defined according to Calvin's theology in the *Institutes*. Although many have viewed him mainly as a scholar, he considered scholarship and pastoral ministry as distinct but complementary offices in the life of the church.

3.4 Defining Scholar

As already pointed out in the introduction, it is common to think of scholars as cold and detached from their work, a point brought up by Piper in his discussion of *The Pastor as Scholar*. According to him, scholars are typically “disinterested, dispassionate, composed, detached, unemotional” (2011:23). He cites the late evangelical Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce (1980) who remarked that in his scholarly work, unlike others who are exceptionally gifted and can share about their domestic lives without “self-consciousness and self-deception”, he refrained from it (cited in Piper, 2011:22). Piper (2011:22-23) uses this attitude that he sees in Bruce, and many other scholars, to support his view that Calvin as a pastor was the opposite of that.

It seems that for Piper the turning point from full-time biblical scholarship to full-time pastoral ministry was related to his disdain for of this typical approach of scholars to their work, as described above. Piper says that having spent some time during his sabbatical studying Romans 9, God spoke to him powerfully and said “I, the God of Romans 9, will be *proclaimed* and not just analysed or explained.” (Piper, 2011:44). By referring to “analysing God”, Piper (2011:44) was referring to his scholarly work that he had been doing in Romans 9 during that sabbatical and presumably the work he had done in other texts of the Bible in the past too. Piper’s words reveal the general perception of the public towards scholars, that they are only concerned with analysing the text and not putting it into practice: this perception has unfortunately also marred the image of Calvin.

There is a nuanced ambiguity in defining the concept of a scholar in relation to pastoral work; Carson’s introduction to “*The Scholar as Pastor*” draws attention to this; he endeavours to point out the difficulty of referring to a pastor as a scholar. According to Carson (2011:71) the title “scholar” in England is a term used to refer to someone “exceptionally gifted” in their particular field of study. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) definition of scholar affirms Carson’s conclusions. According to the OED (2005:928) a scholar is “a person with great knowledge of a particular subject”. It is unclear whether “exceptionally gifted” and “great knowledge” can be used synonymously in this case. Nevertheless, when comparing Carson’s reference to the English definition and the OED definition of scholar, it is evident that the two are very close in meaning. It is clear in these definitions that there must be outstanding aspects

about the person referred to as a scholar in both cases. The one is “exceptionally gifted” in their field while the other has “great knowledge” in a particular field. According to these definitions, Calvin would thus be considered a scholar only if he was outstanding in his field of study.

There is, however, an alternative title that can be used: according to Carson (2011:71) it is that of an “academic”. In England, this title would be given to someone who lectures at an academic institution but who is not necessarily exceptional in their field (Carson, 2011:71). Since Calvin did lecture in theology at the University of Geneva, an academic institution that he founded (Parker, 2006:160), was he consequently an academic according to Carson’s alternative? This researcher argues that Calvin was exceptional in his field of study so that the title “scholar” according to the English definition, was appropriate for him.

Most importantly, one should allow Calvin’s definition of a “scholar” to speak for itself. Even though he does not seem to have used the term as such, in his teaching on the office of the doctors or the teachers of the church in the *Institutes* and in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* and his other works we find his definition of the “scholar” of the Bible.

3.4.1 Calvin on the Office of the Scholar

As already pointed out (section 1.8.1) Calvin distinguished between the office of the pastor and that of the teacher or doctor, or what would be known as a scholar. According to him, the role of the doctor was to expound the Scriptures for the benefit of the church. In the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, Calvin outlined the expectations of the one who holds the office of a doctor of the church; two points examined in the research make his position on this office apparent.

First, he referred to the second of the four orders of the church as the “order of schools” and mentioned he did so because he wanted to use a more intelligible word (Calvin, 1541:62). This reference elucidates what Calvin had in mind in terms of the office of the doctor of the church, which to him, was to teach the Bible, particularly in an academic institution (Calvin, 1541:63).

Secondly, he referred to the doctors as “lecturers in theology” who should be learned in languages and the humanities since their students can only profit from the lectures if they are instructed in these (Calvin, 1541:62-63). There is no doubt that Calvin’s

requirement that the doctors appointed to that office should be learned in languages was with reference to the predominant original languages of the Bible¹⁰, Hebrew and Greek. Calvin prized these and it appears that he headhunted lecturers who were proficient in these languages so he could make them part of the curriculum in the University of Geneva; also, that he himself lectured directly in them (Parker, 2006:159&161). Calvin's high regard for these languages was characteristic of his time, of the scholastic approach to theology (Parker, 2006:45 &161). Considering his expectation that a doctor of the church had to be educated in these languages, we may deduce that Calvin would have defined a scholar as someone who was educated in the interpretation of Scripture and could instruct others.

It is evident that Calvin believed that the office of the doctor of the church was biblically based according to Ephesians 4:11. Stott argues that Paul's reference to the office of pastor and teacher in Ephesians 4:11 is a reference to the same office, such that the correct reading of that verse is pastor-teacher (Stott, 1979:163) but Calvin distinguished the two offices as already noted. Accordingly, we may deduce that Calvin firstly thought there was place for an office that resembles what we now call a scholar, in the church, secondly that the function of this office "is the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine, in order that the purity of the Gospel be not corrupted either by ignorance or by evil opinions." (Calvin, 2006:62) and thirdly that the doctor fulfilled his office by expounding Scripture.

3.5 Conclusion

It is apparent that Calvin's view of the pastoral office was heavily influenced by the Scriptures and that his definitions reflect an attempt to remain true to this bedrock of his theology. In addition, he distinguished the office of the pastor from the office of the scholar in his view of the orders of the church. The significance of this is elaborated on in the following chapters as Calvin's scholarly inclination is reviewed in light of his pastoral ministry.

¹⁰ Aramaic is one of the original languages of the Bible but it does not seem that Calvin emphasised learning it as much as he did Greek and Hebrew.

Chapter 4 Ministry Through Intellect

4.1 Introduction

The church has a rich intellectual heritage and the demand for intellectually competent clergyman was commonplace in its history. In a recent article on the pastor-scholar discussion among contemporary Reformed Evangelicals, Robinson (2015) points out that “Calvin hardly stands alone on the landscape of church history as a pastor who also laboured to produce works of enduring scholarship for the instruction and edification of Christ’s church.” Indeed, if we also consider that a significant part of Jewish history that is found in the Old Testament Scriptures forms an important portion of the history of the church as we know it today, then the history of the church dates as far back as the history of the Jews as recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures and so does its intellectual heritage.

For the purposes of this chapter it is sufficient to note the continuity of this intellectual heritage in the New Testament Scriptures; the Jewish religious leaders were intellectually competent leaders who were expected to educate the Jewish nation in their Scriptures. This expectation of the Jewish leaders seems to be implied by Jesus in Matthew 23 when he says “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat” (Matt. 23:2), that is, their role is the one Moses played in teaching the nation the law of God. Commenting on the phrase “Moses’ seat” Gundry (2010:100) points out, “Sitting in Moses seat means passing on the authoritative words of Moses, as the scholars and Pharisees did in public readings of the Law.” Slightly earlier Wilkins (2004:726) similarly remarked, “Jesus’ statement confirms the use of the “seat of Moses” as a place from which experts in the law teach.” This authoritative teaching role of the Jewish religious leaders is confirmed by Jesus in his reply to Nicodemus the Pharisee in the gospel of John, “Jesus answered him [Nicodemus], ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?’” (John 3:10.) Perhaps this expectation of the Jewish religious leaders, to be intellectually competent men who educated the Jewish nation in the Scriptures, was also the cause of astonishment amongst the Jewish religious leaders when Jesus’ disciples, Peter and John, spoke so eloquently, yet in these leaders’ eyes they were uneducated men (Acts 4:13).

Amongst the Apostles there is evidence in the Scriptures that Paul, though not initially educated for Christian ministry, was an academically trained Apostle, as becomes

obvious in his New Testament letters and in his pastoral activities in the book of Acts. Using his credentials to defend himself before the Jews, he said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day." (Acts 22:3). In acknowledging Paul's intellectual acumen and his pastoral zeal in the New Testament Scriptures, Robinson (2015) exclaims, "Of course, the pastor-scholar or pastor-theologian *par excellence* is found in the Apostle Paul. Having studied at the feet of the Jewish rabbi Gamaliel, he was converted to Christ and then planted churches across the Mediterranean Basin. His letters are among the greatest theological treatises ever written. Paul's pen dripped pastoral love—a shepherd's heart and a scholar's mind, both inspired by God's Spirit." It is clear that Paul saw his writing as significant to his ministry. This is evident in Pauline epistles that confront the reader with intellectual depth that is unparalleled in the New Testament and yet at the same time displays pastoral zeal that is hard to ignore.

There is continuity of this intellectual heritage of the church beyond the New Testament. Robinson (2015) notes this continuity across church history:

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) was a preacher of God's Word and a scholar. Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), arguably America's greatest theological mind, was a long time pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts. When he died unexpectedly at the age of 54, Edwards had just been elected president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton). His pastoral, philosophical, and theological works are voluminous – a result of rigorous study. And Edwards's Puritan forebears, consistent with the broader Reformed tradition, valued a well-educated pulpit.

Scrutiny of this intellectual heritage during the Reformation reveals that even though the Reformers wished to dissociate from the practices of the Catholic Church that they had deemed corrupt, they were also strongly influenced by the Scholasticism they inherited from the Medieval Church. This is the intellectual context where the likes of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were educated. As discussed in Chapter 1, from his early education Calvin was immersed in this intellectual heritage, and this had an important influence on the way he practised his ministry.

In this chapter, therefore, some of the most prominent genres of Calvin's theological works are analysed with the view to recognising that these writings were aimed at pastoring the church rather than conceived as works of great scholarship as we may

perceive them today. The analysis will assist in an interpretation and a study of Calvin's works that considers the pastoral framework in most of them.

4.2 Pastoral Works

Shawn D. Wright, an associate professor of Church History at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the USA, wrote an article for the Southern Baptist Journal of Theology entitled "*John Calvin as Pastor*". Wright's article was part of the commemoration of Calvin's quincentenary in 2009, by Evangelicals worldwide. This was an interesting article since Calvin's reputation in academe is as scholar, rather than as pastor. What was invaluable in Wright's (2009:5) article was that it brought to attention the manifold ways in which arguments could be made that Calvin was consumed by his pastoral ministry and that most of his theological works were part of his pastoral labours. Among these works Wright (2009:5) briefly highlighted, first, Calvin's agenda for reform in the church that he outlined in *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* and *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church*. Second, he directed his readers to the *Catechism* Calvin wrote for the Church in Geneva to "clarify basic Christian doctrines" and to instruct the Genevans "in the new-found truth of Protestantism" (Wright, 2009:5). Third, Wright (2009:5) turned to Calvin's epistolary output and remarked that most were pastoral in nature. Fourth, Wright (2009:5) commented on Calvin's liturgical innovations that were first shaped while he was still in Strasbourg and continued to be moulded for the rest of his pastoral ministry. Fifth, as if not already apparent, Wright (2009:5) pointed out that Calvin's sermons were very pastoral. Sixth, Wright (2009:5) mentioned Calvin's treatises which were, at heart, pastoral. And in the seventh place and as the bedrock for his article, the *Institutes*, Wright (2009:5) postulated, revealed Calvin's pastoral theology. In this article Wright, did not go on to expound on the pastoral inclination of the first six genres of Calvin's literary work in the rest of the article but focused on the *Institutes*. However, this chapter addresses the argument that all the literary works by John Calvin pointed out by Wright reflected his pastoral theology. To be able to recognise Calvin's pastoral commitment in some of these works, each genre will be explored in order, beginning with his works outlining the agenda for reforming the church.

4.2.1 Ministry through Agenda for Reform

For Calvin's agenda for reforming the church, his treatises *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* and *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church* would be the two noteworthy documents to highlight. Nevertheless, in this chapter the focus will just be placed on the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* as most ideas in it are repeated in the latter work. Reid's (1954:18.) comment on the content of this document in his introductory summary is noteworthy: "In the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, Calvin turns his attention to practical affairs, and the ordering of the Church and of the city of Geneva in accordance with his theological presuppositions." Reid's comment may lead some to think that the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* was just an administrative document, yet, as Reid remarks, through this document Calvin's intention was to outline the practical affairs and the ordering of the church. Parker (2006:108) also note that the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* "were intended to legislate for the whole of church life." Reid goes on to point out that the basis of this administrative document was Calvin's "theological presuppositions" (Reid, 1954:18). Perhaps the most apparent of Calvin's theological concerns in *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* was to clarify the role of the church. Calvin presupposed from the Scriptures that the role of the church was to "preach the gospel and administer sacraments, to teach believers the faith, to train them in obedience, and to care for the suffering" and according to Calvin, this fourfold role of the church was fulfilled by the four orders of the church which we saw in Chapter 2.

On examining Calvin's agenda for reforming the church in this treatise, which Calvin ensured had its foundations in the Scriptures to avoid the error of the Roman Catholics on final authority (section 3.2), the pastoral concern is apparent. With the four orders of the church Calvin made provision in his agenda for reforming the church, for the latter to be fully attended to in every area of its existence. Not only does Calvin make provision for the church to be ministered to by the four orders of the church in *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, but he also gives instructions on the sacraments initiated by Jesus for the benefit of believers; the marriage ceremony and how it is to be conducted; burial; visitation of the sick; visitation of parishioners; the catechising of children to ensure they learn the faith from when they are young (Calvin, 1541:58-73).

Thus, in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which intended to outline Calvin's desire to reform the church his care both for the spiritual and physical needs of those whom he

and the other pastors ministered to is evident. He cared how the church was ordered so that it was fulfilling its function for the sake of believers. And at the same time there is also a display of great intellectual engagement with the Holy Scriptures that cannot be ignored. Calvin was adamant in this treatise and in all his other works which outline his agenda for reforming the church that the Scriptures are the basis of how the church should be organised. Thus, it is not farfetched to conclude that the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* was a theological argument for the practical ordering of church ministry with a pastoral concern.

4.2.2 Ministry through the Catechism

Calvin's *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* was produced to help pastors teach the basics of Reformed faith, declares Fatio (1986:2). Calvin's dedication in the preface to the Catechism, "John Calvin, to the faithful ministers of Christ who preach the pure doctrine of the gospel in East Friesland" (Calvin, 1945:88), seems to point to that conclusion. Teaching the right doctrine was one of Calvin's chief concerns in the Catechism. This is evident in the comment he made in the preface, warning against the production of individual catechisms that would harm the church with their teaching if premature provision was made for each church to produce their own catechism:

I wanted to say this by way of preface to testify to my readers that I also, as is right, have made it a first charge on my attention, not to transmit anything in this Catechism of mine that is not agreeable to the doctrine held by all the pious. (Calvin, 1545:89.)

Calvin's stern warning against teaching false doctrines is plain throughout his dedicatory letter (Calvin, 1545:88-91) to the Catechism and is not a surprise since it was intended for pastors to instruct children in the foundations of faith. He, then, may be said to have been diligently exercising his pastoral duty by uttering this stern warning as the duty of the pastor was not merely to proclaim the Word of God but also to resist false doctrine (Calvin, 1536:32). And here in the Catechism, Calvin, by all means possible, seeks to resist what did not accord with true doctrine by writing a word of caution as to what he expected of a diligent shepherd of God's flock.

Godfrey (2009:60) picks up on another important point about the Catechism, that it was intended for the instruction of children in the Christian faith as part of improving the religious life of the church. Godfrey's comment show that with the Catechism,

Calvin intended pastoral care for the children in that he did not neglect them in the ordering of the church life; pastors were tasked with the catechising of the children (Godfrey, 2009:59). Calvin wrote the Catechism for these particular purposes (Godfrey, 2009:60). Noteworthy here too is Calvin's goal in catechising the children:

When a child has been well enough instructed to pass the Catechism, he is to recite solemnly the sum of what it contains, and also to make profession of his Christianity in the presence of the Church. (Calvin, 1545:69.)

And this faith in Jesus would in turn secure their relationship with God and their eternal salvation. This excerpt from the catechism points that out:

M[inister]: What is the right way of honouring him [God]?

C[atechumen]: To put all our trust in him; to study to serve him all our life, by obeying his will; to call upon him, whenever any need impels us, seeking in him salvation and whatever good things can be desired; and lastly, to acknowledge him with both heart and mouth to be the only author of all good things. (Calvin, 1545:91-92.)

Calvin's concern for the instruction of children in the Christian faith in his catechism reveals that he cared for all his congregants and sought the salvation of all of them, despite their age.

Concerning the structure of the Catechism, Godfrey (2009:60) remarks that the Genevan Catechism is not one of the greatest Reformed catechisms. This is because it is very lengthy in the number of questions and answers and is flawed in its method of instruction (Godfrey, 2009:60). This, we may concur, is a fair comment by Godfrey and as one reads the Catechism it becomes somewhat tedious and more of an academic exercise than a personal confession of faith. While Godfrey makes a valid point, the pastoral concern and the theology of this work should not be ignored. In his summary of the content of the Catechism, Reid remarks that the "The *Genevan Catechism* ranks with the most notable statements of the Christian faith ever to be produced, and, if in the first place constructed for children, it has nevertheless deservedly remained a permanent source of spiritual and theological edification." (1954:18.) Godfrey (2009:60) would agree with Reid on this because he goes on to point out that the catechism had its strengths: one of them was the clarity of its theology.

It is manifest in the said Catechism that Calvin was, in a scholarly manner, concerned about right theology even in his ministry to the children and it would not be out of place also to assert that Calvin's concern was pastoral. On the one hand, in the Catechism, and in his efforts to teach the correct doctrine, he performs the role of a doctor of the church (Calvin, 1559:1057) while on the other hand we see his concern for the salvation of others by instructing them in the faith, as is required of a pastor of the church (Calvin, 1559:1059).

4.2.3 Ministry through Letters and Treatises

The letters and treatises will be dealt with under this heading as a unit because, as Parker (2006:173-174) notes, from the many letters that Calvin wrote, most were theological treatises. Among his letters that were more the latter than mere acquaintanceship correspondence, his reply to Sadolet is noteworthy. Selderhuis (2009:100) remarks that there is consensus among both friends and foes of Calvin on the literary genius of this document. Then again, what Wright points out about a significant number of Calvin's letters is of great value in this study. Wright (2009:5) maintains that a significant number of Calvin's letters were pastoral in nature because he was often asked by others to give pastoral counsel from a distance and he was always willing to give biblical counsel; this is apparent in the "great extent of his letter-writing" (Adam, 1996:62).

Perhaps none among Calvin's scholars puts the pastoral tone of Calvin's letters better than his contemporary biographer, successor and friend, Beza, as he recounts Calvin's interaction with some of the faithful Genevans during his exile in Strasbourg:

But Calvin did not permit so long a period to elapse before he manifested the due affection which he felt as a pastor for his flock at Geneva, who were at that time suffering among their fellow citizens in a very severe manner for the common cause of religion. The excellent letters which he wrote at Strasburg, both in the year of his expulsion and the following, exhibit striking marks of his affection, in which his whole object is, in an especial manner, to exhort them to repentance before God, to forbearance towards the wicked, to concord and peace with their pastors, and prayer and supplication to the Head of the Church. (Beza, 1564:8)

Bonnet, in his preface to *“Letters of John Calvin”*, a work that compiled all of Calvin’s surviving letters into multiple volumes, concurs. Commenting on the manifold content of Calvin’s letters Bonnet (1972:9) wrote:

He [Calvin in his letters] exhorts with the same authority the humble ministers of the Gospel and the powerful monarchs of England, Sweden, and Poland. He holds communion with Luther and Melanchthon, animates Knox, encourages Coligny, Condé, Jeanne d’ Albert, and the Duchess of Ferrara; while in his familiar letters to Farel, Viret, and Theodore Beza, he pours out the overflowings of a heart with the deepest and most acute sensibility. The same man, worn by watchings and sickness, but rising by the energy of the soul above the weakness of the body, overturns the party of Libertines, lays the foundations of the greatness of Geneva, establishes foreign churches, strengthens the martyrs, dictates to the Protestant princes the wisest and most perspicuous counsels; negotiates, argues, teaches, prays, and with his latest breath, gives utterance to words of power, which posterity receives as the political and religious testament of the man.

Perhaps the strength of Bonnet’s summary of Calvin’s myriad letters is found in the fact that, having had access to Calvin’s numerous letters, some of which Beza did not have access to (Bonnet, 1972:7), Bonnet could conclude with a summary similar in its theme to what Beza had concluded, centuries before him, about those letters of Calvin that he knew of.

Parker (2006:172), in his biography of Calvin also postulates that Calvin wrote numerous letters to many different people from different nationalities, and that these he saw as an extension of his ministry of the word as Adam (1996:62) also maintains. Adams strengthens his assertion by quoting one of Calvin’s letters that is revealing of his pastoral concern:

You know how Scripture warns us to give us courage as we fight for the cause of the Son of God. Meditate on what you have seen and heard formally so that you may put it into practice. Everything that I can ever tell you will not help unless it is drawn from this well...You really do not need my letters so much for what you hope to learn from me, you can find much nearer to hand if you diligently read God’s holy Word. (cited in Adam, 1996:62.)

Calvin’s theological sharpness and his pastoral heart were also evident in his treatises. In his introductory summary of *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, Reid (1954:14.), comparing the content of Calvin’s treatises to the *Institutes*, comments, “The fact is

that the Treatises introduce to the reader not a change of matter but a diversity of application. Calvin the thinker is, of course, always present in all the works which he composed.” And indeed, in his treatises, Calvin the scholar is present and this would be expected if his treatises were to be worthwhile. What is also of great significance is that Calvin the pastor appears to be generally present in his treatises. This is evident in his treatise “*Summary of Doctrine concerning the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments*” which outlines the tenets of the Lord’s Supper. There, Calvin wrote:

In the Supper of the Lord, the external minister holds forth the external symbols, the bread of the Lord and the wine of the Lord, which are perceived by the organs of our body, consumed and swallowed. The internal minister, the Holy Spirit, not by external organs of the body, but by his secret virtue, feeds the souls of the faithful, both truly and efficaciously, with the body and the blood of the Lord unto eternal life, as truly as they know themselves to be nourished for this mortal life by bread and wine. (Calvin, s.a.:174.)

That Calvin wrote such a treatise should be enough for us to be persuaded that he was concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of believers. In this quote, we have his theological engagement with the Scriptures on the administration and the efficacy of the Lord’s Supper in the believer’s life. His care and concern for the spiritual wellbeing of others is evident.

4.2.4 Ministry through Commentaries

On Calvin’s commentaries, a point made by Haroutunian is enlightening. He postulates that, “The grandeur of this achievement becomes all the more evident when we remember that these Commentaries were the work not of a detached scholar, but of a Reformer whose days were filled largely with pastoral work both in the church and in the state.” (Haroutunian, 1958:16.) Haroutunian’s assertion hints to the writing style and type of content readers should expect in Calvin’s commentaries: First, they are scholarly works, but not those of a remote scholar. If not the work of such a scholar then, second, the reader should expect to be edified even in this most scholarly work of Calvin because it was pastoral. An excerpt of Calvin’s (cited in Godfrey) commentary on Ephesians 1:7 illustrates these two important points:

The apostle is still illustrating the material cause, the manner in which we are reconciled to God through Christ. By his death he has restored us to favour with the Father; and therefore we ought always to direct our minds to the blood of Christ, as the means by which we obtain divine grace.

These do not sound like the words of a distant scholar who sought to be objective in his exegesis without bringing the text to bear on the lives of his readers. It is apparent that Calvin sought to explain the meaning of the text by clarifying the apostle's intentions. It is important to note the manner in which he explained the meaning of the text; it is very personal in that it sought to address the reader as well and not just explain the text. The adverb "therefore" is significant in Calvin's explanation of this text because we see here that he was drawing out the implications of the text for the life of the reader. Calvin could perhaps have been excused in his commentaries for being very technical and detached by some of his contemporary scholars because it was expected, but instead in his commentaries we find a scholar concerned, not just to explain the text, but that his readers' lives were impacted by the text. Calvin himself made this point in his introduction to his commentary on the Psalms,

I realized, of course, that many would have been more attracted and tickled if I had included a varied mass of ostentatious and glittering material. But nothing meant more to me than to consider the up building of the church. May God who gave me this purpose also guarantee its success. (Calvin, 1557:57.)

It would be a fallacious and unwarranted misrepresentation to conclude from this statement anything other than that Calvin's commentaries, although major pieces of scholarly work, were aimed at pastoring the church.

4.2.5 Ministry through Sermons

As pointed out in Chapter 3, to Calvin, preaching was the central role of the pastoral office, as is evident in his description of the office of the pastors in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, "As to the pastors, whom Scripture also sometimes calls elders and ministers, their office is to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments and to enjoin" (1541:58.) It is apparent from this that all these injunctions involved a great deal of intellectual engagement with the Word of God, written in the Holy Scriptures to be carried out. Calvin's preaching when dealing with his ministry by means of intellect can thus not be ignored since this was the primary way in which he pastored. Therefore, in the following section Calvin's preaching is examined more extensively.

Concerning Calvin's view of preaching, Selderhuis (2009:110) opines that Calvin held such a high view of preaching and took his preaching so seriously that his pulpit was physically elevated. Nonetheless this was not to elevate the preacher but it was so that the Word of God might descend upon the hearers. Fatio (1986:1) supposes that this is a reflection of Calvin's theology of preaching because he believed that when he spoke as the preacher, God himself was speaking. His insistence upon the primacy of the preaching role of the pastor was because he believed preaching was like a visitation from God through which he reached out to people (Fatio, 1986:1).

It would perhaps be sufficient to end this discussion on that note: that in the view of some, when the preacher preaches, God is speaking. But Calvin's high view of preaching does not end there. Selderhuis points out that "according to Calvin the power of the Word of God to change people's lives was twofold: first it changed God's enemies into his children, and second, it taught God's children to honour their Father more and more." (2009:111.) Thus, the pastoral nature of Calvin's sermons is apparent: the preaching of the Word of God is for the benefit of the hearers. As a result, Calvin put much effort into his preaching by spending a great deal of time preparing for his sermons. Yet, apparently even with all that hard work put in he still complained that he did not have enough time to prepare (Selderhuis, 2009:112).

Some may question the pastoral nature of Calvin's preaching since it was not always well received by all his hearers. Selderhuis (2009:113) points out that Calvin was often criticised sometimes even while he was in the pulpit preaching. This raises the question of whether Calvin's preaching was pastoral if that was a common occurrence. It is the view of this researcher that the critique of Calvin's preaching, even by his contemporaries, should not cause us to suspect the pastoral nature of Calvin's preaching. It is true that Calvin often admonished his hearers and spoke against certain sinful practices in his sermons; it appears that this could be where most of the criticism came from, according to Selderhuis (2009:114). Perhaps the people then were much bolder and more willing to act instantaneously than our generation, but we cannot postulate from the regular outbursts of criticism from his congregants that his sermons lacked pastoral concern. Nevertheless, Calvin did not relinquish the preaching of admonitions because of the criticism he encountered from his congregation. Selderhuis (2009:114) goes on to point out that Calvin was careful to

admonish and speak out against sinful practices from the pulpit because he believed it was necessary, pastorally speaking, and indeed, according to Calvin, the pastoral office involved admonishing (1541:58). According to Calvin, this role was not to bruise the souls of the listeners but to show concern for them, and he expected pastors to exercise this role with that purpose in mind (Selderhuis, 2009:114). Calvin also felt the necessity of admonishment because “there is no room in the church for cold pastors” because the pastor’s task was not just to bring God’s Word to the people but also plead before God on their behalf (Selderhuis, 2009:114).

On the quality of Calvin’s sermons, Wright (2009:5) points out that they were: “regularly filled with sensitive, or forceful, applications to the weary Genevan congregation.” Godfrey (2009:62), contrasting Calvin’s sermons with his commentaries, acknowledges the difference between the two genres. One would expect Calvin’s sermons and commentaries to be the same, since he had many other responsibilities as pastor, but they were surprisingly quite different (Godfrey 2009:62). The difference lies in the fact that, while his commentaries were very exegetical, his sermons contained less exegesis of the text and more application to the common people (Godfrey, 2009:62). It has been a huge concern of former seminarians who have been in ministry for a significant number of years that one of the pitfalls of young preachers, especially those fresh out of seminary, is explaining the biblical text but not appropriating it sufficiently to their audience. This pitfall is also pointed out by John Stott who dedicates a whole chapter in his book on preaching, *Between Two Worlds*, to “preaching as building bridges” between the text of the Bible and the contemporary world (1982, 135-179). To make the point about preaching that does not connect with contemporary hearers because it is intellectually unattainable to ordinary congregants, Stott quotes a statement by C.H. Spurgeon that is perhaps a true reflection of this kind of preaching. Spurgeon (in Stott, 1982:147) remarked that “Jesus said feed my sheep not my giraffes”. Spurgeon was referring to the sermons of some preachers that had become intellectually unattainable for the ordinary congregants, as Stott (1982:147) proceeds to point out. If Godfrey is right in his contrasting of Calvin’s preaching and his commentaries, then the person who was probably in most danger of this pitfall, the scholarly John Calvin, appears to have been well aware of this and tried to build bridges with his contemporary world in his preaching. Even Parker (2006:120), commenting on Calvin’s preaching style, acknowledges that in his preaching Calvin’s

“language was clear and easy. He spoke in a way that the Genevese [*sic*] could understand; even it would seem, to the point of using some of their idiosyncrasies of French, some of which may still be encountered today.”

An example of Calvin’s preaching that shows his pastoral concern in its style is helpful here. This sermon by Calvin is quoted at length by Godfrey, in contrast to Calvin’s commentary on the same text, Ephesians 1:7. It is of note that Calvin’s style in this sermon is to quote the text, explain it and then apply it to his contemporary hearers.

The text: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...” (Ephesians 1:7)

Calvin’s explanation of the text: “But let us notice here how St. Paul uses two words to express how we are reconciled to God. First, he sets down the ransom or redemption, which amounts to the same thing, and afterwards he sets down the forgiveness of sins.” (cited in Godfrey, 2009:64.)

Calvin’s application of the text: “Therefore whenever we intend to seek God’s favour and mercy, let us fasten the whole of our minds on the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may there find the means by which to appease God’s wrath. And, furthermore, seeing that our sins are done away by such payment and satisfaction, let us understand that we cannot bring anything of our own by which to be reconciled to God.” (cited in Godfrey, 2009:65)

This sermon is an example of Calvin’s simplicity and clarity in preaching. There is an obvious effort to explain the text of Scripture in a simple and clear manner; that is, what we are confronted with in this sermon, but not only that. There is also an effort to bring the text to bear onto the lives of the congregants. Godfrey (2009:65) points out, “The sermon is not simply an expansion of his thought. It is an application of the text to the life of the people.” The simplicity and clarity of Calvin’s sermon is surprising, considering the scholarly acumen demonstrated in his oeuvre; this could be attributed to his desire to perform well his duties of feeding the flock of Jesus with the Word of God as he insisted was the primary task of the pastor as noted in the beginning of this section.

4.2.6 Ministry through the Institutes

Even though the thick two volumes of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that we have today do not look like a summary, in them Calvin sums up his theology (Parker 2006:72). It is fascinating that this major theological work is pastoral and Wright is acute in outlining Calvin's pastoral vision in the *Institutes*. He says, "This, then, is the outline of Calvin's pastoral worldview. First, its God-centeredness. Second, its robust view of humanity. Third, its stress on the work of Christ and the necessity of trusting him. Fourth, its admission that the Christian life is the path of a difficult pilgrimage. And, fifth, its eternal focus." (2009:9.) Wright's outline is accurate and one only needs to read the *Institutes* to perceive this pastoral focus. The pastoral tone of the *Institutes* set by Calvin can also be seen in this purpose statement:

When I first set my hand to this work, nothing was farther from my mind, most glorious King, than to write something that might afterward be offered to Your Majesty. My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness. (Calvin, 1559:9.)

The pastoral concern expressed by this purpose statement of the *Institutes* is manifest. Thus, Calvin's greatest work of theology, revised more than once, was written not as an academic paper (Piper, 2009:30), although it is very academic, but as a pastoral document since the goal of his teaching in the *Institutes* was the "true godliness" of Christians and, in the view of this researcher, nothing could be more pastoral.

Having briefly analysed these works, it seems reasonable to conclude that Calvin's theological works, at the least the ones we have briefly assessed, were prodigious works of ministry, an extension of his pastoral ministry. In these works, Calvin exudes a high level of theological concern, for which he is often celebrated among scholars, including many Evangelicals. That is to be expected from an intellectual like Calvin who astonished even his contemporaries with his theological acumen (Parker, 1954:61). But it is not farfetched to also conclude that the considerable intellectual acumen found in his work is also matched by his strong pastoral concern for the Church of his time, whether local or abroad.

4.3 Pastoral Office Fulfilled and Vindicated

Having concisely analysed the different genres of Calvin's works through which he also practised his pastoral ministry, it is worthwhile to point out that Calvin was adamant that the biblical pastoral office, although primarily fulfilled by the teaching¹¹ of the Word of God, is vindicated through the practice of the pastor fulfilling his pastoral duties. That Calvin held that preaching and teaching was the primary vocation of the pastor is evident in most of his works that directly address the pastoral office, some of which have already been pointed out. But in *The Genevan Confession*¹² under the heading *Ministers of the Word*, in succinct manner, Calvin made his view of how the pastor fulfils his duties much more forceful:

We recognize no other pastors in the Church than faithful pastors of the Word of God, feeding the sheep of Jesus Christ on the one hand with instruction, admonition, consolation, exhortation, deprecation; and on the other resisting all false doctrines and deceptions of the devil, without mixing with the pure doctrine of the Scriptures their dreams or their foolish imaginings. (Calvin, 1536:32.)

This brief statement on the pastoral office gives insight into Calvin's view on how the pastor fulfilled his office, according to his interpretation of the Scriptures. First, in the context of Roman Catholicism where the clergy were less reliant on the written word (section 3.2.1), Calvin was adamant that in the Reformed tradition the pastors were to be recognised by the church as legitimate shepherds of God's church only if they were faithful minister of the Word of God as written in the Scriptures. Second, all the pastor's duties stated in the confession are word based duties and were to be achieved through the Word of God. Third, the pastors were required to resist all false teaching, even their own, by the Word of God. This is in accord with the definition of the pastoral office arrived at in the previous chapter.

¹¹ Although according to Calvin (1559:1059) preaching is the office of the pastor and teaching the office of the doctor he seems to use the word "teach" loosely to refer also to the office of the pastor as in this statement, "Further, nothing fosters mutual love more fittingly than for men to be bound together with this bond: one is appointed pastor to teach the rest, and those bidden to be pupils receive the common teaching from one mouth." (1559:1054.) The term is used loosely here as well in this chapter, unless otherwise specified.

¹² Although the Genevan Confession seems like the work of a group and reads like one this researcher considers it as primarily the work and views of Calvin. Commenting on the authorship of this document in his introduction to Calvin's treatises Reid points out, "It is noteworthy that the first article explicitly indicates the source from which the further contents proceed—the Word of God: the rule of faith and religion is Scripture alone. Thus, an eminently characteristic and recurrent feature of Calvin's thought and writing early receives prominent expression." (1954:17)

However, Calvin's motif on the role of the pastor was not just the preaching or teaching of the word. To him, the genuine pastoral office was vindicated by the practice of the ministers. And on the vindication of the pastoral office through practice, Calvin's letter to Sadolet is very insightful. Calvin wrote this letter on behalf of the Genevans while in exile in Strasbourg as a reply to Sadolet's request that the Genevans return to the "faith of their fathers", referring to the Catholic Church and its teachings (Parker, 2006:104). Sadolet was calling the Genevans back to the familiar territory of Roman Catholicism. The timing of his letter was calculated as Calvin and Farel, the key leaders of the Reformation in Geneva, had been banished and without their influence the Genevans were vulnerable and likely to succumb (Selderhuis, 2009:100). Nevertheless, according to Parker (2006:105), Calvin outmanoeuvred Sadolet; in his reply he defended the Reformed faith by arguing that the Catholic Church did not represent the true Christian faith and therefore as far as the Genevans were concerned there was no church to return to. By pointing out the flaws in Catholic doctrines, Calvin rendered them false and instead called Sadolet back "to the faith of the fathers and the apostles of the church" (Parker 2006:105).

Besides the issue of false doctrine, one of the reasons why Calvin was adamant that the Catholic Church did not represent the true faith was because the corrupt practices of the church revealed the real character of its leaders (Selderhuis, 2009:100). Calvin made a stark assessment of the Catholic clergy in his reply to Sadolet:

For thou didst forewarn us both by thy Son and by the apostles that into that place there would rise persons to whom I ought by no means to consent. Christ predicted not of strangers, but of men who should pass themselves off as pastors, that they would be ravenous wolves and false prophets, and at the same time warned us to beware of them (Matt. 7:15). (Calvin, 1954:249.)

Calvin referred to Catholic clergy as false teachers by appropriating Jesus' warning in Matthew 7, to these clergymen. In Matthew, Jesus warned those listening to him, in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1), of prophets who looked genuine on the outside but were false ones (Matthew 7:15). There is no doubt, maintains France (1994:914) in his commentary on this verse, that this warning would have evoked the question in the listeners, "how then will we recognize them if they look genuine on the outside?" and Jesus, as if anticipating the question, referred them to the conduct of the supposed prophets, "you'll recognize them by their fruit" (Matthew 7:16). Because

of their corrupt practices, to Calvin, the Catholic clergy had proved themselves to be wolves in sheep clothing as Jesus cautioned in Matthew 7. In fact, Calvin went on to cite other passages (Acts 20:29, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 2:18) that also warn of these false teachers whose practices show them to be false prophets, and applied these to the Catholic clergy (Calvin, 1954:249). The implication of this plain reading of the passage in Matthew 7 to which Calvin referred, was that the authenticity of Christian clergy was vindicated by their practice. They may have been teaching in Jesus' name but did their practice show they were genuine? Thus, Calvin held that the genuine pastoral office, which, he firmly held, was primarily fulfilled by the teaching of the Word of God as we have seen, was vindicated by the practices of the ministers which proved whether they were indeed true shepherds of God's flock or not.

So far in this study Calvin's pastoral concern in his teaching from his theological works has been addressed. The analysis of Calvin's practice will indicate if Calvin as a pastor is vindicated.

4.4 Calvin as Pastor in Practice

On the subject of Calvin as pastor in practice, another one of his contemporary biographers, Nicolas Colladon (1530-1586) provides insight on what to expect from Calvin's pastoral practice:

Calvin on his part did not in the least spare himself. He worked much harder than his strength and health could bear. Every other week he preached one sermon a day. Three times a week he lectured on theology. He was present at every meeting of the consistory, and made all the remonstrances. Every Friday, at a discussion on Scripture, which was called the congregation, what he added after the main speaker was like a lesson in itself. He did not fail to visit the sick, to give pastoral advice, and to do an endless number of things that went with the ordinary exercises of his ministry. Aside from the usual activities, he was greatly occupied with the faithful in France. He instructed, exhorted, counselled, and comforted them in the midst of persecution, as well as interceded for them, or had others do it when he thought there was a way (in Haroutunian, 1958:26).

Beza (1564:10), his biographer, concurred with Colladon's detailed description of Calvin's daily labours as we saw in Chapter 2. Perhaps what is obvious in both Colladon's and Beza's detailed descriptions of Calvin's weekly labours is that he was consumed by his pastoral duties which occupied his entire week. What is interesting

is that both Colladon and Beza found it necessary in their biographies of Calvin to document details of his weekly labours. We may postulate from this that the practice was a common occurrence in the writing of biographies at that time. However, both Colladon and Beza did not stop at that for it seems that to them, Calvin stood out as a pastor because of his great labours.

4.4.1 Pastoral Care and Duties

In his treatise on the *Order of Visitation of the Country Churches*, a major concern of Calvin for the churches is that the minister is fulfilling his duties by caring for his congregants, not only in preaching, but also in practice. The fourth reason he gives for the regular visitation of members of these churches is revealing:

Fourth, to know whether the Minister is diligent not only in preaching but also in visiting the sick, and particularly in admonishing those that need it, and to prevent anything that might be for the dishonour of God. (Calvin, 1546:74)

It could be disputed that Calvin's provision in this treatise for the congregants to be looked after by their minister in this way tells nothing of his pastoral practice; to be persuaded we must see Calvin practicing what he preaches and not just telling others to do so. Indeed, Calvin's provision in this treatise for the country church to be looked after in the way described does not say much about his practice, but it says a great deal about his pastoral concern. On Calvin practising, what he preaches it's already been pointed out from Colladon that he never failed to visit the sick (in Haroutunian, 1958:26). One of the incidents that proved that Calvin took this duty seriously took place during the plague. This was ravaging the people in Geneva and, according to Selderhuis (2009:138), Calvin had been asked by the city council not to visit the people affected by the plague to avoid being infected because "he was considered too important" for the church in Geneva. But Calvin, troubled about the verdict of the council, wrote to his friend, Viret, lamenting what their attitude as pastors to those affected by the plague should have been:

But so long as we are in this ministry, I do not see that any excuse will avail us if, through fear of infection, we are found wanting in the discharge of our duty where we are most needed. (in Parker, 1954:88)

Calvin said this in the context of taking the risk himself by going to visit those affected by the plague. He was willing to go if it happened that one of the other ministers who had offered himself, fell sick because of the plague, even though the council had ordered Calvin not to (Parker, 1954:87-88). Thus, it is evident that Calvin was willing to risk his own life to fulfil the provision he had made in his own treatise. One can almost feel Calvin's pastoral concern for the suffering and if his attitude here does not at least begin to vindicate Calvin as pastor in practice, the little that is known of his pastoral practices will.

4.5 Decisions

Some of Calvin's decisions, particularly those that involved his engagement in pastoral ministry, are revealing of his pastoral concern and practice. In particular, two decisions that he made prove this point. First, his decision to continue as a pastor in Strasbourg after he was banished from Geneva and second, his decision to return to Geneva having been harshly treated and banished. Regarding his decision to stay in Geneva for the first time, it can be asserted that it was a premature decision and does not indicate any pastoral concern. That would be a legitimate observation, although a counter argument that Calvin was adequately aware of the demands of pastoral ministry could be advanced. Parker (2006:30-40) points out that during his time in Bourges there are records that he preached in some churches and occasionally in village churches. If we consider that to Calvin the primary way by which the pastor fulfils his duty is by preaching, as has been noted, even though it may be argued that by this time his theology of the pastoral office was not that well developed, it can be inferred from these records that Calvin was aware of the demands of the pastoral ministry he was eventually appointed to in Geneva.

First, Calvin's decision to be a pastor in Strasbourg. If there was ever a time that Calvin could have deserted his pastoral ministry and pursued his initial ambitions of scholarly solitude, it was during his time in exile at Strasbourg after the Genevan council had banished him and Farel (Parker, 2006:90). The banishment occurred after much opposition and conflict with the Genevan council, but Calvin finally settled in Strasbourg, where Bucer appointed him the pastor of a refugee church. Using similar tactics to those of Farel that Calvin gives us an account of in his introduction to his

Psalms commentary (section 2.4), Bucer managed to persuade Calvin to stay in Strasbourg and pastor a church there.

What we see in Calvin's account is that the move to Strasbourg afforded him the opportunity to resign from his pastoral duties, for which he was not initially ready (section 2.4). Being freed from these would mean that Calvin would focus on his scholarly work, as he had planned to in the first place. Everything seemed conducive to this: he was in Strasbourg where he had planned to go to pursue his studies in quietness and he no longer had the pastoral responsibilities of Geneva; yet he succumbed once again to another terrifying call to pastoral ministry by Bucer (Fatio, 1986:1). It seems that Calvin was compelled to take the post in Strasbourg, not just by Bucer's tactics, but also because he had come to view himself as primarily a pastor. This, from his reference to his ministry in Geneva as "my vocation". By this time, Calvin would have been aware of the demands of pastoral ministry from his experience in Geneva. He was conscious of the struggles he had faced in Geneva that caused him to exclaim, "Rather would I submit to death a hundred times than to that cross on which I had to perish daily a thousand times over" (in Parker, 2006:105). And therefore, it would not be farfetched to conclude that Calvin's decision to remain and minister in Strasbourg was informed partly by the possibility that he had come to view his primary role in the church as a pastoral one. The terror induced by Bucer was simply a nudge which he needed to continue "his work of teaching" and not give up.

Second, Calvin's decision to return to Geneva. On this point, Calvin's words will have much more force:

Afterwards the Lord had pity on the City of Geneva and quieted the deadly conflicts there. After he had by his wondrous power frustrated both the criminal conspiracies and the bloody attempts at force, I was compelled, against my own will, to take again my former position. The safety of that church was far too important in my mind for me to refuse to meet even death for its sake. But my timidity kept suggesting to me excuses of every color [*sic*] for refusing to put my shoulder again under so heavy a burden. However, the demand of duty and faith at length conquered, and I went back to the flock from which I had been driven away. With how much grief, with how many tears, and in how great anxiety I went, God is my best witness. Many faithful men also understood my reluctance and would have wished to see me released from this pain if they had not been constrained by the same fear which influenced me. (Calvin, 1557:54.)

Calvin chose to go back to Geneva for the sake of the Genevans even though he had suffered immensely at their hands. This was a decision, it seems, of a pastor committed to shepherding the flock of Jesus as required in John 21:15-17. What was evident when examining Calvin's teachings, is that his theological contribution played a significant role in extending his pastoral reach. Thus, Calvin did not become known as the "Reformer of Geneva" or Geneva become "the city of Calvin" because of his political influence in the city after his return; instead, it appears that he became associated with Geneva in that way because of his "preaching, organizing, admonishing, writing – in short fulfilling his pastoral ministry" (Fatio, 1986:1).

4.6 Further Impact: University of Geneva

Parker (2006:157) notes that Calvin was very concerned about the unsatisfactory provisions for education in Geneva. According to Calvin, the Word of God made provision for Christians to be educated, at least in the Scriptures, through the office of the doctor (Calvin, 1559:1057); hence it is not surprising that these unsatisfactory conditions concerned him. Out of that concern the University of Geneva emerged, which was officially opened in 1559 (Gonzalez, 1999:68). This University was the product of the intellectual in Calvin. According to Parker (2006:158-159), while the building project for the university was still underway, Calvin was already looking for teaching staff: not just any, but the best available. And, from Parker's (2006:58-160) account, it seems that Calvin is the one who also set the curriculum for the university, placing theology as the mother of all sciences as the Medieval Church had done (Newby, 2009:18-24).

Calvin himself was one of the lecturers at the university (Parker, 2006:160); the impact of his teaching there was astounding. According to Parker (2006:160), as a result of the University of Geneva and of Calvin's lecturing, more biblical literature than before was produced in Geneva from Calvin's lectures which were recorded by stenographers. By the time Calvin died he had written commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible (Selderhuis, 2009:98). This is significant because, as it has already been argued, these commentaries were the means of pastoring the church. Consequently, the church was served even more through Calvin's learning because of the establishment of this academy.

Furthermore, according to Gonzalez (1999:68) the university attracted many students from all over Europe. Reeves (2009:109) summarises for us the impact of the academy in Europe:

Calvin quite deliberately turned Geneva into the international centre for the propagation of the gospel. He advised Protestant rulers from Scotland to Italy, trained refugees who came to Geneva and then returned to their native countries, and dispatched missionaries to Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Italy, even South America. The real engine-room for all this was the college and academy that Calvin opened in 1559. Starting with a general education and moving on to a detailed study of theology and books of the Bible, it equipped the pastors, who could then be dispatched, fully armed and trained, from Geneva.

One notable figure in Church History upon whom Calvin had a significant influence, was the Scottish Reformer, John Knox. Knox is said to have come to Geneva because of persecution and studied under Calvin (Bond, 2011:15-17). He returned to Scotland armed with Reformed theology learned from Calvin; his revolutionary influence transformed Christianity in Scotland, making Knox one of the most notable Reformers in the history of the Church of Scotland (Bond, 2011:101-102).

4.7 Not a Fit Pastor

Examination of his teaching and practice demonstrates that Calvin was a pastor by vocation, but leaves open the question of whether he was a fit pastor. The answer to this is significant for this study since it may be inferred from the *Ecclesiastical Ordinance* that Calvin himself gave the standard by which pastors should be held accountable. Therefore, if he was a pastor, he is not exempt from being measured by that same standard. It may be concluded that Calvin's fitness as a pastor is revealed in his teaching and practice, in tune with his pastoral concern, but those who want to discredit Calvin's fitness as a pastor, and most of his critics do, can argue for the negative. Even though some of Calvin's critics do not explicitly critique his fitness as a pastor, painting a gloomy image in their portrayal of him, as Hillar (in Dickson, 2009:1) does, this raises questions concerning his abilities as a pastor. And since Calvin's pastoral ministry would have involved both teaching and practice, the criticism comes from both angles.

Regarding his doctrine, one of the aspects that could cause doubt about or invite criticism regarding the fitness of Calvin as a pastor is the magnitude of the opposition

and criticism he faced in Geneva because of his teaching. Parker (2006:73-90;124;145) dedicates a significant amount of time in his biography of Calvin to detailing these. For this reason, some may argue that, if Calvin was a fit pastor, he would not have been so vehemently opposed as much as he was in Geneva by those who had first-hand experience of the benefit of his teaching. Regarding his practice, Calvin is usually criticised, it seems, for his involvement in the punishment of his enemies such as Sebastian Castello, Jerome Bolsec and Michael Servetus, to name just a few prominent ones (McMahon, 2013). This treatment of his enemies seems to be Hillar's contention with Calvin, according to Dickson (2009:1-2). Calvin himself admitted his faults on his deathbed (Dickson, 2009:1) and he may have been thinking of some of the criticism mentioned above as part of his faults. But this leaves the question of whether they discredit his fitness as a pastor.

4.7.1 Criticism and Opposition

First, even if not unfounded, criticism should not always lead one to the conclusion that the person critiqued is not fit for the particular task or job for which he or she was appointed. In fact, in the ministry it may be a sign that the critiqued is faithfully ministering; Calvin was well aware of this possibility because in his commentary on 1 Timothy 5:19 he says,

None are more exposed to slanders and insults than godly teachers. This comes not only from the difficulty of their duties, which are so great that sometimes they sink under them, or stagger or halt or take a false step, so that wicked men find many occasions of finding fault with them; but added to that, even when they do all their duties correctly and commit not even the smallest error, they never avoid a thousand criticisms. (in Mahaney, 2013.)

Calvin here does not appear to have been deluded about people's response to his ministry. He was aware from the teaching of the Scriptures that faithful pastors were not immune to criticism, while Mahaney (2011) points out that in Calvin [we] have an example of a faithful pastor in the history of the church, who faced vehement opposition and criticism mainly because of his faithfulness in teaching. Another factor to consider is that Calvin's criticism was at its height when he was in Geneva, but in Strasbourg his ministry flourished (Reeves, 2009:95-96). This could give pause for thought that there were perhaps other factors that may have invited so much opposition in Geneva, other than the view that he was not a fit pastor.

4.7.2 Punishment of Enemies

According to McMahon (2013) the most prominent of Calvin's contemporary critics were Castellio, Bolsec and Servetus; all these met a bitter end and one of the reasons for that was their doctrinal differences with Calvin. Perhaps the most striking of these "bitter ends" is the case involving the burning of Servetus. It seems that this is the one incident that has brought the most criticism onto Calvin's head when it comes to his practice as pastor, casting doubt on whether we can even attribute the title pastor to him; perhaps the title "the unopposed dictator of Geneva" seems to fit him better, as the ODCS describes him, cited in *Christianity Today* (1986). It would be inhuman not to sympathise with those who question Calvin's fitness as a pastor because of his involvement in the execution of those he considered heretics, since such seemingly heinous sentences are condemnable in the contemporary world. But there are two reasons requiring consideration before reaching any conclusions on Calvin's fitness as pastor due to his involvement in some of these executions. The discussion, in the interest of brevity, is limited to Servetus's case.

First, the state of Geneva executed Servetus, not Calvin. Hillar refers to the incident of Servetus' execution as Calvin's "method of intimidation" as if Calvin himself had killed Servetus (in Dickson, 2009:2). But a closer examination of this incident reveals that Calvin did not have much say in Servetus' execution except to prepare a list of accusations against him. Servetus was a fugitive who came to Geneva as a "dead man walking" because the Spanish Inquisition had officially ordered the burning of his image, which was symbolic of his sentence, that is, execution (Selderhuis, 2009:204). It seems that Servetus' execution was inevitable, both Catholics and Protestants were ready to carry out the sentence, as Bouwsma (1988:27) points out. Moreover, at the time of Servetus's trial, Calvin's influence in Geneva was very weak because of the great tension between him and those in power in Geneva, who did not like him. Parker (2006:146) refers to this time in this way, "It was at this point, when Calvin's authority in Geneva was at its lowest, when he was in fact defeated, that there happened an event of such a magnitude and with such implications that the whole face of the battle changed." If this is true, then it seems improbable that Calvin would have had much say in Servetus' trial. Even when the verdict of that trial was Servetus' execution by burning, Calvin pleaded to the state for a less harsh method of execution than burning

but his advice was not heeded (Parker, 2006:152). Thus, charging Calvin with killing Servetus cannot be accurate nor can we judge him as an unfit pastor because of this incident over which he did not have much influence. In fact, that he sought a less harsh method of execution for Servetus is telling of his pastoral care.

Second, Calvin regarded the burning of heretics as protection for the church. It must be remembered that the state and the church were practically one entity with different functions in the community (Selderhuis, 2009:27). According to Calvin, the duty of the state was to establish true religion and to maintain it once it was established; therefore, it was right for the state to punish heresy as a crime (Parker, 2006:153). The fact that Calvin believed that heretics should be punished, as Hillar (2002:11-12) points out in his article on Castellio, does not make him an unfit pastor. Calvin was concerned for correct doctrine; he saw the primary way the pastor looked after the church of Christ as preaching such doctrine (section 3.2.3). Calvin's concern for inaccurate doctrine is also evident in that he viewed the special office of the doctor of the church as not just the teaching of sound doctrine but the refuting of erroneous doctrine that is destructive to the church (section 3.3.1): heretics were those who taught false doctrines. Thus, it is right to infer that the actions that Calvin took against heretics were done in the name of pastoral care for the church.

4.8 Conclusion

There seems to be renewed interest among Reformed Evangelicals on the subject of the scholar-pastor, which we have seen in the intellectual heritage of the Church and in the analysis of Calvin's works and practice. The recent efforts by Kruger to outline the different options seminarians have regarding their future practice of their theological qualifications will be invaluable in our conclusion. In his taxonomy, Kruger (2015) in a chiastic manner outlines six options: 1. the Pastor; 2. the Pastor-Scholar; 3. the Pastor-Scholar who is active in the scholarly world; 4. the Scholar-Pastor who is active in the church; 5. the Scholar-Pastor; 6. the Scholar. Although in practice, Kruger's elaboration on what each of these would entail is not simple, it is helpful to have such categories for our understanding of the differences that might exist.

Perhaps the two categories that stand out the most regarding Calvin in the analysis in this section, are the second and the third, *the Pastor-scholar* and *the Pastor-Scholar who is active in the scholarly world* respectively. Kruger (2015) elaborates:

2. ***The Pastor-Scholar:*** This individual has an interest in theological and scholarly issues that goes beyond the average pastor mentioned above. Thus, he is often engaged in serious reading, study, and academic work that goes beyond weekly sermon prep [*sic*]. And such study often informs his ministry, preaching, leadership, and counselling [*sic*]. He is the type of individual that would probably work hard to retain some level of proficiency in Greek-Hebrew even after many years in the pastoral ministry.

3. ***The Pastor-Scholar who is active in the scholarly world:*** This pastor shares the same deep interest in scholarly issues as the pastor-scholar in the above category, but takes it to the next level by actively contributing to the scholarly world in some fashion. This may include writing books, articles, or giving papers/lectures at conferences and gatherings. Such an individual will often have a Ph.D. or other sort of degree beyond the M.Div.

Calvin did not possess a doctoral degree in theology as we know it today but the analysis in this section of some of his great theological works indicated that they were rich with pastoral concern. It was also apparent from the analysis that Calvin was a pastor, not only in teaching but also in practice in his pastoral duties during his ministry. And therefore, it would not out of place to assign Calvin to Kruger's category of *the Pastor-Scholar who is active in the scholarly word*, but with an emphasis on Calvin as primarily a pastor.

Chapter 5 The Intellectual Responsibility of the Pastors

5.1 Introduction

According to Piper (2010:119), anti-intellectualism in the church or among individual Christians may be defined as the deep suspicion of any emphasis on the use of the mind in relating to God. This attitude has become commonplace in the church and is also sometimes manifest in those who have no allegiance to the Christian faith, but are not oblivious of its existence, tenets and its influence. The anti-intellectual groups of people in the church and individuals hold a sceptical view of any kind of intellectual engagement with the Scriptures in the practice of the ministry of teaching or preaching. This view, observable even among non-adherents of the Christian faith, raises questions about the legitimacy of the way the church's ministry of teaching and preaching is conducted, particularly amongst the Evangelical churches. These questions of legitimacy require our attention if we are to adequately discuss the topic of Calvin's scholarly contribution as an extension of his pastoral ministry.

5.1.1 Anti-intellectual Contentions

To be precise, the anti-intellectuals do not contend against individual Christians engaging the surrounding world at an intellectual level. A Christian working in any other academic field would be acceptable to the aforesaid sceptics, in comparison to a Christian at work in the academic field of theology. In his book, *Called to the Life of the Mind: Some Advice for Evangelical Scholars*, Mouw points out several recollections of this kind of scepticism. One that stands out and sets the tone of the sceptical attitude appears in his opening chapter. Referring to his contemporaries' attitude toward seminarian education Mouw (2015:1.) recalls how in his "...early spiritual environs, higher education was something you suffered through in order to be able to get on with the Lord's real work: the urgent business of proclaiming the Gospel in all of its simplicity and power. This 'simple-Gospel' emphasis was reinforced by considerable anti-intellectual rhetoric from the pulpits." Piper illustrates a similar scepticism experienced by Mouw. He quotes the word of the late evangelist, Billy Sunday, who remarked that if he had a million dollars he would give a dollar to education and the rest to the church (2010:119). Sunday's attitude towards seminarian education is at the heart of the anti-intellectual view that the church has experienced

for decades. Education, particularly of ministers, is regarded with very high suspicion by many, and often despised and regarded as unnecessary.

This attitude is a problem in the church: as Guinness (1994) (in Piper, 2010:28) exclaimed, “At root, evangelical anti-intellectualism is both a scandal and a sin. It is a scandal in the sense of being an offence and a stumbling block that needlessly hinders serious people from considering the Christian faith and coming to Christ. It is a sin because it is a refusal, contrary to Jesus’ two great commandments, to love the Lord our God with our minds.”

It must be acknowledged that some of the concerns raised by Christians who are anti-intellectual are legitimate and genuine for the spiritual wellbeing, as one may put it, of the church.

First, they contend that history tells a gloomy story when it comes to the relationship between the church and reason. Historically, in their view, there has been more harm than good done by intellectualism as many social atrocities, like the world wars and holocausts, resulted from the powerful and twisted use of reason (Piper, 2010:121). The church has not been immune to this warped employment of reason, they argue. The result of the intellectualism of Protestant liberalism has plagued the church for decades with effects that are still felt even today, with an emphasis on reason as the arbiter of all knowledge, including the Scriptures (Mouw, 2015:19). Any thoughtful Christian cannot deny the dire effects of this ideology. Protestant liberalism has caused the Christian truth to appear relative and has caused the church to lose confidence in the authority of Scripture.

Second, they contend that in the church, the educated ministers seemed to do more harm than good because of their formal education in seminaries. The ministers who trained there for the pastorate came out detached and unable to connect with the ordinary people in their preaching (Piper, 2010:121). In his classic work *The Reformed Pastor* Baxter (1656:146-150) censured his contemporaries for being cold and detached in their ministry of teaching and preaching. It is also worth noting that the movement, German Pietism, spearheaded by Spener and Francke that called for a renewed and greater devotion to God and had an impact on most of Europe, was a

result of the rationalism that resulted from the lack of piety from ministers towards their pastoral duties. Gonzalez (1985:205) notes: “Pietism was a response to the dogmatism of the theologians and the rationalism of the philosophers, both of which contrasted with the living faith that is at the heart of Christianity”. Again, the negative effects of academic engagement with the Scriptures that the sceptics point out cannot be denied.

The contentions of the anti-intellectuals show that an emphasis on intellectualism historically had negative effects on the church. This has damaged the reputation of any kind of highly intellectual engagement with the Scriptures among many Christians, so that there is much reason to sympathise with the anti-intellectuals.

As we have already noted, Calvin is readily associated with the detached Christian ministers or scholars. To some, he epitomises the damage which intellectual engagement with the Scriptures has caused in the church through his doctrines reasoned out of Scripture. But according to McNeill (1960: LI), in the *Institutes*, it becomes clear to any discerning reader that Calvin had no room in his theology for misplaced intellectualism. Yet, along the same lines, in Calvin’s theology there was also no room for anti-intellectualism. Therefore, the concern of this chapter is with gaining an understanding of Calvin’s view of the role of knowledgeable engagement with the Scripture that he epitomises in his scholarly works as well as in his preaching and teaching ministry.

In the previous chapter the church’s long heritage of intelligently engaging the Scriptures was addressed. In line with that heritage, Calvin and the rest of the Reformers carried out their pastoral duties. Duncan (2015) (in Robinson, 2015) remarked “The whole Reformed tradition – whether Presbyterian, Congregationalist, or Baptist – has always valued an educated ministry and, consequently, pastors who are able to read, learn, think, write, and teach at the highest level. The pastor-theologian or pastor-scholar is very much rooted in 500 years of the Reformed tradition...”. We also saw that Calvin’s literature, whether written as an academic piece, like his commentaries or some of his treatises or as a church polity document, like his church orders, exhibits a high level of pastoral concern.

This chapter notes that Calvin, in his theology, had a significant emphasis on the intellectual responsibility of the ministers of the church as they were responsible for educating God's people using the Scriptures. This emphasis informed Calvin's pastoral practice. He was not indifferent, suspicious, nor did he have tendency to neglect the use of reason in the practice of his pastoral ministry. He encouraged the same attitude in his fellow ministers and enjoined the church to appoint ministers with a similar outlook because of the intellectual responsibility they possess as they teach and preach the Word of God. An adequate study of Calvin's theology of this intellectual responsibility is important as it informs us of Calvin's ideology in investigating his pastoral ministry, which as we have emphasised was heavily influenced by intellectual engagement with the Word of God in the Scriptures.

5.2 The Intellectual Responsibility of Individuals

5.2.1 The Mind and the Knowledge of God

In the *Institutes*, Calvin's emphasis on intellectual responsibility does not begin with the ministers, but with individuals. The individual is responsible for knowing God both in an intellectual and relational capacity. This is evident in the opening words of the first chapter of the *Institutes*, already quoted: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." (Calvin 1559:35.) Wright (2009:5-6) points out that these words set the tone for Calvin's pastoral emphasis in the rest of the *Institutes*. He maintains that the "knowledge"¹³ that Calvin is referring to is not accumulated data about God, but rather a relational knowledge of God:

We see that Calvin was not merely about increasing his readers' data set; he didn't just want to give them more information. His labors had a relational end. His goal was to bring his readers into a relationship with the living God, and this relationship would be enriched as they understood themselves—and themselves in relation to God – better. (Wright, 2009:6)

Wright (2009:6) continues in the rest of his article to illustrate this by elaborating on what he terms the "Pastoral Vision" that appears in the rest of the *Institutes*. This,

¹³ McNeill (1960:35-36) does point out in the footnote that the words Calvin often uses interchangeably for knowledge in the *Institutes*, *cognition* and *notitia*, in contemporary English are probably close to "existential apprehension" in meaning. Although to Calvin these words are not purely referring to objective knowledge as McNeill notes, they do not seem to be devoid of objectivity either. We observe this in the other words closely related to these that Calvin also uses for knowledge in the *Institutes*, "*agnitio*, recognition or acknowledgment; *intelligentia*, primarily meaning perception; and *scientia*, primarily expert knowledge." (McNeill 1960:36).

according to Wright (2009:6), was Calvin's world view when he wrote them. In the "Pastoral Vision" it is apparent that Calvin had no intention of merely informing people about God, but rather of leading them to relate to God better. As already indicated, this researcher believes that Wright correctly interprets the term "knowledge" in Calvin's opening statement as meaning more than mere accumulation of information about God, while additional study in the rest of the *Institutes* reveals that Calvin had no intention of setting in opposition information about God and relational knowledge about God. On further examination of the *Institutes*, beyond his initial statement on knowing God, it becomes clear that Calvin was not opposed to intellectual knowledge about God, but that for him this, if rightly used, led to relational knowledge of God, an idea that Wright also acknowledges in his interpretation of Calvin's use of the term (2009:6).

If the *Institutes* then, particularly the 1559 final edition, represent an indication and summary of Calvin's theology at a much more mature level compared to the 1536 initial version, then his opening words were emphasising the intellectual responsibility of the individual in knowing God. According to Calvin, "knowing God" had a dual nature in that it entailed knowing information about God and knowing God relationally. This statement illustrates his argument:

Suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder his nature, and how completely perfect are his righteousness, wisdom, and power—the straightedge to which we must be shaped. Then, what masquerading earlier as righteousness was pleasing in us will soon grow filthy in its consummate wickedness. What wonderfully impressed us under the name of wisdom will stink in its very foolishness. What wore the face of power will prove itself the most miserable weakness. That is, what in us seems perfection itself corresponds ill to the purity of God. (Calvin, 1559:39.)

Calvin first pointed to the activity of "thinking right" about God and secondly to the result thereof. The activity of thinking is an intellectual endeavour whether the result of the activity conveys brilliance or lack thereof. Although acknowledging that those whose activity of thinking results in brilliance are more able thinkers than those whose thought lacks brilliance, the activity itself requires the use of the mind¹⁴. Calvin's point was that in this particular instance, the activity of thinking correctly about God resulted

¹⁴ This researcher acknowledges the limitation of this argument as there people are very limited or have no cognitive function worth mentioning.

in a right relationship with God as the individual realised that what they had thought of as good was actually not good. According to Calvin, then, knowing God required the use of the mind. But how did one begin to think accurately about God?

5.2.2 Scripture and the Knowledge of God

Calvin posited Scripture as the one certain way people come to this knowledge of God and themselves, “Nevertheless, all things will tend to this end, that God, the Artificer of the universe, is made manifest to us in Scripture, and that what we ought to think of him is set forth there, lest we seek some uncertain deity by devious paths” (Calvin, 1559:71). This intellectual activity of studying the Scriptures resulted in a right relationship with God according to Calvin (1559:69-70.), “It was not in vain, then, that he [God] added the light of his Word by which to become known unto salvation; and he regarded as worthy of this privilege those whom he pleased to gather more closely and intimately to himself.” It seemed unthinkable to Calvin for one to arrive at the relational knowledge of God without any intellectual comprehension of information about God – as the norm rather than the exception. Calvin does acknowledge elsewhere in the *Institutes* that the exception is God using other means apart from his Word in Scripture to bring people to the knowledge of himself but that was not the norm (Calvin, 1559:74). He elaborated on the norm:

Now, in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture...For, since the human mind because of its feebleness can in no way attain to God unless it be aided and assisted by his Sacred Word, all mortals at that time—except for the Jews—because they were seeking God without the Word, had of necessity to stagger about in vanity and error. (Calvin, 1559:72-74.)

And thus, according to Calvin’s theology of knowing God, the normal means by which individuals came to know God both at an intellectual level and relationally was through his Word written in the Scriptures. To him, the Scriptures were the cornerstone of knowing God.

5.2.3 The Holy Spirit and the Knowledge of God

Even though Scripture was the one certain way to begin to think rightly about God, to Calvin the only certain path for individuals to respond rightly to the Scriptural

knowledge was attained through the activity of the Holy Spirit. This issue of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian seems to be the strongest factor in fostering anti-intellectualism in the church. Calvin pointed out the contentions of his contemporaries on the subject, "Yet, indeed, they contend that it is not worthy of the Spirit of God, to whom all things ought to be subject, himself to be subject to Scripture." (Calvin, 1559:94.) This argument by Calvin's contemporary critics posited the words of the Holy Spirit as more authoritative than the words of the Holy Scriptures. But Calvin strongly censured this attitude as forsaking both the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit his critics were professing to uphold:

Furthermore, those who, having forsaken Scripture, imagine some way or other of reaching God, ought to be thought of as not so much gripped by error as carried away with frenzy. For of late, certain giddy men have arisen who, with great haughtiness exalting the teaching office of the Spirit, despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who, as they express it, still follow the dead and killing letter. (Calvin, 1559:93.)

To Calvin, for the Spirit to dishonour or to relegate to second class Scriptural revelation compared to the direct revelations that the Spirit himself bestows, as his critics argued, would have been to dishonour himself since he is the author of Scripture and Scripture reveals him as he should be known and desires to be known (Calvin, 1559:94-95). Calvin held a high view of Scripture as the revelation of the Spirit. The Scriptures are the Spirit's words, the Spirit's revelation.

God did not bring forth his Word among men for the sake of a momentary display, intending at the coming of his Spirit to abolish it. Rather, he sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word. (Calvin, 1559:95.)

From Calvin's general view of the individual Christians' use of the mind in attaining knowledge, his view of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit's role in revealing the knowledge of God and attesting to it, it is evident that in the *Institutes* he expressed a high opinion of the intellectual responsibility the individual Christian had in attaining the knowledge of God. This is the knowledge that summed up all wisdom in the *Institutes* and it was a highly intellectual endeavour.

5.3 The Intellectual Responsibility of the Minister in the Institutes

Not only do individuals have an intellectual obligation to attain the knowledge of God in Calvin's theology but even more so, the ministers of God's church. The latter are used by God to educate the congregation with this knowledge through the teaching and preaching of God's Word. Calvin's emphasis that God uses the ministry of human beings to make himself known was a major theme in his treatment of the role of the ministers in the *Institutes*: "Nevertheless, because he [God] does not dwell among us in visible presence [Matt. 26:11], we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor [sic], but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work." (Calvin, 1559:1053).

To Calvin (1559:1053), this type of ministry, making God known, was entirely carried out by proclaiming the Word of God alone. For Calvin's contemporaries, this word would have been taught or preached through the exegesis of the Scriptures rather than direct revelation by God through the Holy Spirit to individuals or a group, as his critics argued. Calvin was open to God speaking to individuals through direct revelation as he had done in the past, as evidenced in the rest of Scripture, but he insisted that the primary way God communicated to people was through his written Word.

In other words, for the ministers the responsibility to teach God's Word to others was a priority: "Further, nothing fosters mutual love more fittingly than for men to be bound together with this bond: one is appointed pastor to teach the rest, and those bidden to be pupils receive the common teaching from one mouth." (Calvin 1559:1054.)

This intellectual responsibility of the ministers to the congregation was bestowed on the pastor by God himself: "The Lord has therefore bound his church together with a knot that he foresaw would be the strongest means of keeping unity, while he entrusted to men the teaching of salvation and everlasting life in order that through their hands it might be communicated to the rest. (Calvin, 1559:1054).

As indicated, Calvin distinguished the roles of the minister and the doctor of the church. If there is anything that stands out in Calvin's reforms of church government, it is his

four orders of the church as briefly pointed out in Chapter 2. In this system, the minister and the doctor's roles were distinct:

Next come pastors and teachers, whom the church can never go without. There is, I believe, this difference between them: teachers are not put in charge of discipline, or administering the sacraments, or warnings and exhortations, but only of Scriptural interpretation—to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers. But the pastoral office includes all these functions within itself. (Calvin, 1559:1057.)

The function of the doctor or the teacher, as Calvin puts it here, was primarily the interpretation of the word, which is an intellectual endeavour. It cannot be postulated from Calvin's list of the functions of the pastoral office that the pastor's functions involved less or none of the intellectual endeavours required of the doctor of the church, but were merely pragmatic. Rather, from Calvin's conclusion it may be seen that the functions of the pastors involved both pragmatics and interpretation of the Scriptures. If this is so – that the office of the doctor is an intellectual one – then it follows that the office of the pastor is an intellectual office and more. In Calvin's treatment of the role of the minister, the ministers were not exempt from intellectual endeavour in fulfilling their task but were in fact obligated by the demands of their jobs, the Scriptures and by God himself to engage with their congregations on an intellectual level in their teaching and preaching.

5.4 The Intellectual Responsibility of the Pastor in the Bible

It was mentioned earlier that Farel seems to have taken an interest in Calvin, compelling him into pastoral ministry, because of his theological *magnum opus*, the *Institutes*. Fatio (1986:1) wrote, "Calvin was an intellectual and was going to Strasbourg to continue his studies; pastoral ministry was not his forte. Yet Farel got him to stay." Consequently, according to Fatio, Calvin's intellectual acumen landed him in pastoral ministry. And, as already noted, to Calvin the pastor, Scripture, not the word of human beings, was the final authority (Parker, 2006:81). Therefore, having discussed Calvin's theology in the *Institutes*, this section continues with a brief discussion on what the Scriptures teach about intellectual responsibility in attaining the knowledge that summed up all wisdom with its salvific effects.

5.5 Scripture and the Intellect

One of the verses often quoted by anti-intellectuals against any forms of intellectualism in the church is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Some take this verse as promoting anti-intellectualism. In fact, Ulrich (2008:5) points out that some critics of the Reformation often point to the practice of Protestants frequently quoting this verse to argue that the Reformation, by its nature, was anti-intellectual. But Calvin, a leader in his own right among the Reformers, had a contrary interpretation of this verse:

By "being fools" we do not mean being stupid; nor do we direct those who are learned in the liberal sciences to jettison their knowledge, and those that are gifted with quickness of mind to become dull, as if a man cannot be a Christian unless he is more like a beast than a man. The profession of Christianity requires us to be immature, not in our thinking, but in malice (1 Cor 14:20). But do not let anyone bring trust in his own mental resources or his learning into the school of Christ; do not let anyone be swollen with pride or full of distaste, and so be quick to reject what he is told, indeed even before he has sampled it." (in Noll, 1994)

Calvin's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:27 was contrary to the notion that the Bible censures any intellectual pursuits in attaining the knowledge of God. In fact, he argued from this verse that the Scripture required the use of the mind in attaining to the knowledge of God. He postulated that the requirement of the "profession of Christianity" is not to be immature in our thinking, which we've seen to Calvin was an intellectual activity, but in doing evil. To put Calvin's statement positively, the "profession of Christianity" requires that the Christian be mature in their thinking and not in doing evil. As one studies the Scriptures one is made aware of their demand for intellectual engagement with them. A brief discussion of the meaning of some of the passages from Scripture which require this will make this apparent:

First, the command, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). What is perhaps noteworthy in this command is the fact that the Christian is called to love the Lord with his or her mind. Carson (2011:76) repudiates the evangelical tradition that treats this text as an "authorisation of all Christian intellectual endeavour." This text, as Carson points out, is primarily about loving God with all our being and not necessarily a text on intellectual

pursuits. But does loving the Lord with all our being exclude the intellectual endeavours? There does not seem to be any warrant in the Scriptures that the notion of being anti-intellectual is more loving to God than using one's intellectual capacity to serve him. Piper (2010:83-84) makes the point that the inclusion of loving the Lord with all our minds in this command is a reference to the use, particularly, of our intellectual capacity in our pursuit of God while Bowers in his lecture on the "*Christian Intellectual Responsibility in Modern Africa*" alluded to a similar interpretation of this verse:

One may observe for a start that the evangelical community in Africa, at least at its more popular levels, may not always be especially oriented to the *intellectual* responsibilities of true Christian discipleship, the Christian calling both to speak for and to live out, within the African context, the biblical summons to a *discipleship of the mind*. (2013:2).

This interpretation and appropriation of the command for one to love the Lord with his or her mind seems to fit well with what Jesus was intending in his command. Carson's warning is legitimate: the command is not a call for all Christians to pursue scholarly intellectual endeavours. There is a need for both academics and ordinary Christians in the life of the church (Mouw, 2015:41-42). But this biblical command seems to be calling all adherents of the Christian faith to be active in the use of their intellectual capacity in the pursuit of God. The command is more pro-intellect than anti-intellect. Second, the requirement, "an overseer must...be able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). Commenting on this passage, MacLeay remarked, "...the distinctive character of the overseer and the elder is the ability to teach God's Word faithfully." (2010:122). For Calvin, the requirement was higher as pointed out earlier. He expected the pastor to be learned in the languages of Hebrew and Greek (Godfrey, 2009:67). Calvin's requirement of the ministers to be learned in the languages was obviously not a biblical command nor should it be taken as one. However, in considering that to Calvin Scripture was the authoritative Word of God it could be supposed that in the Scriptures he found warrant for intellectual demands for the ministers: here in this verse that stipulates a characteristic of the overseer, we find one. This verse required that those charged with leading the church be able to do the work of teaching, which is an intellectual exercise as has already been noted.

Third, the customary behaviour, “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead,” (Acts 17:2). It is interesting here that Luke mentions that it was Paul’s custom to go into the synagogues and reason with Jews, because it assumes that Luke saw reasoning as serving Paul’s ministry and not undermining it. Commenting on this custom of Paul, Piper observes, “For example, at least ten times in the book of Acts, Luke says that Paul’s strategy was to ‘reason’ with people in his effort to convert them to Christ and build them up (Acts 17:2, 4, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7, 9; 24:25).” If Paul is any example to go by, from his custom of reasoning with his audience in his evangelism, there is no reason to conclude that the Scriptures are anti-intellectual but, rather, pro-intellectual.

5.6 Acts 4:13

One of the other texts that the anti-intellectuals use to argue against any form of intellectualism in the ministry of the church is Acts 4:13: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” This is the account of Peter and John’s trial before the rulers of the Jews for preaching about Jesus (Acts 4:5-9). Commenting on this verse, Ripley (1839), a prominent voice among the anti-intellectuals, contended, “Christ did not see ‘extensive learning’ as essential”, but “committed the promulgation of his religion to ‘unlearned and ignorant’ men” (in Piper, 2010:127-128). Ripley made a legitimate point: formal education does not seem to have been a requirement from Christ to preach the gospel. Nonetheless, this verse also does not promote anti-intellectualism and there are few obvious reasons why this text does not support anti-intellectualism, as Ripley seemed to argue.

First, it seems that Peter and John’s boldness was fostered by the Holy Spirit. Luke points out that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and therefore spoke (Acts 4:8). In other words, there was an intervention by the Holy Spirit that caused them to astonish the educated Jewish rulers with their boldness of speech despite being uneducated. Thus, it does not seem that the Holy Spirit was anti-intellectual, since according to Luke he is the one who aided Peter and John in their speech to engage with their

opponents at an intellectual level that left them dumbfounded. Nanez (2009:1) commenting on this verse about the role of the Holy Spirit in the use of intellect said:

I really don't think that there's any fundamental discrepancy between the Spirit of God and the intellect of man. I don't think that anyone would argue against the fact that Jesus himself put more emphasis on the Holy Spirit's involvement in life and ministry than any other person in history. Yet this is the same one of whom it's said, in him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So, in the person of Christ, we see the perfect balance of intellect and Spirit.

Second, Peter and John were perceived by the rulers of the Jews as uneducated. Considering that these were the rulers of God's people, this is indicative of their attitude towards education, which does not seem to have been anti-intellectual.

Third, the Jewish leaders linked Peter and John's boldness, which did not stem from formal education, to their contact with Jesus. In consequence, Jesus himself does not seem to have been anti-intellectual in his ministry according to these rulers. Stott (1990:98) points out that Jesus had often astonished the Jewish leaders with his exceptional intellectual abilities – without any formal education. Hence Acts 14:13 does not in any way seem to support anti-intellectualism.

5.7 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter the anti-intellectual viewpoint in the church that has caused an outcry among Evangelicals who are committed to intellectual engagement with the Scriptures was pointed out. This view was also prevalent among Calvin's contemporary critics, but in his theology of knowing God in the *Institutes*, Calvin strongly censured this attitude. The chapter set out to show that Calvin placed a significant emphasis on the intellectual responsibility of the ministers in the church as they fulfilled their God given role, and that his emphasis informed his pastoral practice. Examination has indicated that Calvin was not indifferent, suspicious, nor did he tend to neglect the use of the mind in the practice of his pastoral ministry. His *Institutes* are expressive of his view of the role of intellectual engagement in the church by individual Christians and the ministers. Calvin's views refute the anti-intellectual sentiments that plague the church. They repudiate the notion that there is no Scriptural demand for the ministers to be educated in the Scriptures to qualify to hold office. There is an

immense need for learned pastors in the church and the results of Calvin's ministry should be a strong encouragement to persevere in pursuing and using the mind to serve the church of Christ.

Chapter 6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Tracing Calvin's Pastoral Ministry

The aim of this study has been to investigate and analyse Calvin's views on the pastoral office and the major genres of his works to determine whether his theological contribution through his works extended to his pastoral ministry (section 1.3.1). The central argument has been that from the time Calvin was appointed pastor in Geneva until his death, some of his theological works known to us were an extension of his pastoral ministry rather than a scholarly endeavour (section 1.4).

As seen in the study, tracing Calvin's academic background was significant in determining how his scholarly works functioned as an extension of his pastoral ministry. It was observed that although Calvin was initially directed towards the priesthood by his father, who later changed his mind and pointed him towards the study of law, it appears that Calvin also came to own the scholarly endeavour for himself (section 2.4). His initial goal to retreat and study in solitude in Strasbourg and his subsequent desire to be freed from his pastoral duties in Geneva to pursue his initial intentions revealed a great deal about his scholarly ambitions (section 2.4). Calvin excelled as a student and it seems that throughout his academic career this intellectual astuteness later had an influence on the way he conducted his pastoral ministry (section 2.5). As Parker (2006:46) pointed out, the humanistic approach (of appealing to authorities to reinforce an argument) that he had learned during his academic career is a significant feature of his writings (section 2.3). He often advanced his arguments not just by appealing to the Scriptures but also the church fathers, with Augustine being the most prominent (Parker, 2006:46). This humanistic method is also prominent in Calvin's first scholarly publication, his commentary on Seneca (section 2.3). Commenting on his style in that work Parker (2006:46) noted that, "His method, owing much to Budé on the *Pandects*, is partly literary, partly philosophical. He shows himself a true child of the new learning, with his use of Greek, his linguistic approach, his attention to the context, his too careful, something brittle style, his heaping up of authorities." Thus, Calvin's academic background pre-empted the influence of the prominent academic inclination in his pastoral ministry, as investigated in this study.

To determine its influence on the way he carried out his pastoral ministry, Calvin's view of the pastoral office was investigated. It was noted that his view is best understood in

comparison to the Roman Catholic view as the Reformation was the consequence of a protest against some of the tenets of the established church. In comparison with the Roman Catholics, Protestants emphasised the authority of Scripture in all matters of life and religion (section 3.2). This doctrine was very influential in Calvin's view because he sought to base his views on the Scriptures as authoritative, as was common among the Reformers. Consequently, comparing the two views, the Roman Catholic and the Reformed view, shed light for the researcher in understanding the basic principles in Calvin's view.

Calvin was also concerned that the Protestant churches should be Reformed not only in their doctrine but also in their church orders and this was evident in some of his works, which were completely dedicated to the functioning of the Reformed churches. Because of this his works reveal a detailed view of the church government and roles. There is also a detailed definition of the terms 'pastor' and 'scholar' as he used them in his works, which were essential to understanding his view of the pastoral office. It was noted that he did regard the two offices as distinct, so that one could hold one without the other (section 3.2). According to Calvin, the office of the pastor mainly entailed the shepherding of God's people, a role distinct from that of the doctor whose main function it was to interpret the Scripture for the benefit of the church (section 3.3). Calvin did acknowledge the possible overlaps in the specific roles of the two offices, but maintained that they were distinct as one focused on pastoring and the other on scholarly endeavours (section 3.3). His distinguishing of the two roles, the pastoral and scholarly, was significant as Calvin appears to have held both offices at some points in his pastoral career. He was the appointed pastor of the church of St. Pierre's Cathedral in Geneva and lectured in theology (section 3.3) and yet he viewed his primary role as that of a pastor (section 1.8.2). This raised the question of Calvin's view of his theological contribution. It was evident that he viewed his scholarly endeavours as an extension of his pastoral role and not as separate from it. This may have seemed contradictory to Calvin's definition of the pastoral and scholarly offices. But it was observed that according to Calvin, the pastor also had a doctrinal responsibility, which dealt with the seeming contradiction, and it is an appropriate conclusion that Calvin saw his works as an extension of his pastoral ministry.

As it was apparent that Calvin wrote extensively and in a variety of genres, the most prominent of these were analysed to determine the presence of a pastoral framework

in them. This investigation was set off by Wright's argument in his article on Calvin as a pastor, that even though some of Calvin's works are amongst the great theological works, they are a source of his pastoral framework (section 4.2). The genres that were analysed were his works outlining the agenda for reforming the Protestant church, the catechism, the letters, the sermons, treatises and the *Institutes* as Wright outlined them (section 4.2). This was the longest chapter in the dissertation as Wright's assertion provoked an investigation into each of these genres, with a focus on some of the prominent works in these genres.

In discussing Calvin's agenda for reforming the church, special attention was accorded to his treatises *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* and *On the Necessity of Reforming the Church* (section 4.2.1). It was observed that in these two treatises Calvin showed a considerable concern for the governing of the church in a manner befitting the teaching of the Scriptures. Although very scholarly in his arguments, supporting his points by making theological statements referenced by Scripture, Calvin showed immense pastoral concern in his desire to reform the church. This was evident in his emphasis that the result of the reforms he proposed was to be the care of both the spiritual and the physical needs of the congregations (section 4.2.1). In terms of the catechism genre, his Catechism was examined. This was clearly a theological document as it focused on the basic Christian doctrines with which the catechist was required to be acquainted. A further examination of this Catechism revealed that it was immensely pastoral as in it Calvin was concerned also for the salvation of the catechist (section 4.2.2).

Concerning his letters and treatise, it was noted that Calvin wrote voluminously in these two genres, particularly the letters, as pointed out by some experts on his works. He wrote letters and treatises for various reasons: sometimes to address individuals and their personal issues and at other times to address a group. What appeared to be common in these works, even although they were written for different purposes and were sometimes very scholarly in their style and content, was the pastoral concern for the recipients. Thus, these works in these genres were analysed under one heading as a number of them were very similar in style and content. One of the works in these genres that stands out as both a letter and a treatise and also as both a scholarly and a pastoral treatise is his reply to Sadolet. It was noted here that some commentators on Calvin consider this work one of his greatest. Yet a close analysis revealed a

continual reference to salvation, which showed that in this work Calvin was greatly concerned about the salvation of Sadolet and the Genevans, on whose behalf he was replying (section 4.2.3).

Calvin's commentaries were also briefly analysed. In the short examination of the general philosophy behind his commentaries, it was noted that he revealed considerable depth in them, explaining the biblical text concerned as expected of a biblical commentator in his time (section 4.2.4). It was common among Bible commentators from the humanistic tradition to seek to display an elevated grasp of the Scriptures by heaping up quotes from authorities apart from Scripture, a use of the original language to strengthen their arguments and other academic writing methods (section 4.2.4). Although Calvin also employed these approaches in his commentaries, what was clear in examining the general philosophy of his commentaries was the simplicity in his style of writing and his desire to appropriate the Scriptures for his readers, a characteristic that seems to have been less common among some commentators in his time. This demonstrated the pastoral influence Calvin desired to have on his readers.

To determine whether Calvin was as detached as other scholars, a view that is commonly held, it was necessary to examine his sermons. It emerged that firstly, he preached regularly, demonstrating that he was primarily a pastor and not a scholar. Secondly, upon close analysis of the general character of Calvin's sermons, it became evident that these were concerned with Scriptural exegesis to deepen the theological knowledge of his hearers. Nonetheless the simplicity in them and the desire to apply God's Word was hard to ignore. It was common for scholars also to be pastors of local churches during the Reformation, but it appears that Calvin did not follow the trend, of detached biblical scholarship of his contemporaries, in the pulpit in the care he revealed for his congregants.

Finally, the *Institutes* were examined. It is hard to dismiss their theological depth and contribution. Nevertheless, Calvin was clear from his dedication at the beginning about the pastoral nature of the *Institutes* which runs through this *magnum opus*. Most of Calvin's theology is found in this work and seemingly, most of his pastoral contribution to the church too.

Calvin's view on the intellectual responsibilities of the ministers in carrying out their duties was also given attention in Chapter 5. The intention in this chapter was to determine whether Calvin saw intellectual responsibility as a necessary component of the pastoral office and to apply some of the findings into dealing with the intellectual scepticism that the church has experienced in recent years. It was noted here that some of this scepticism is based on the methods of teaching and preaching that are deemed by certain anti-intellectuals to have been popularised by Reformed tradition, represented by the likes of Calvin. It was observed that Calvin did not perceive intellectual endeavours as undesired, unnecessary or even a hindrance to the ministry, but rather regarded them as a necessary component in fulfilling the pastoral duties of preaching and teaching the Word of God to God's people. In his theological teaching on the role and qualification of the pastor, Calvin stressed that the pastor had to be intellectually astute so as to be able to preach to and teach God's people.

6.2 Contemporary Considerations for the Church

According to Strachan (2011:14), in *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor*, there is a resurgence among Reformed Evangelicals, at least in the United States, of the concept of pastors who are as scholarly as the Reformers in the 1500's were. The title of Strachan's (2011:14) introduction to the topic is revealing, "The Return of the Pastor-Scholar". Elaborating, Strachan (2011:14) comments:

Often the roles of pastor and scholar were filled by the same person. The pastor was a scholar; the scholar was a pastor. This is particularly true of the Reformed tradition, the guild whose trans-denominational movement continues to grow in the current day. In Augustine, Luther, Calvin, many Puritans, Edwards, Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones, and many more, we find men who loved the church and excelled as theologians.

Robinson (2015) concurs, as he points out that several books and articles have been recently written propagating the idea of pastor-scholar. Robinson (2015) himself, having wrestled with this idea in his career, offers some insights on what it means to be a pastor-scholar. Recent collaborations on the topic of the pastor-scholar and arguing for its resurgence, Piper and Carson; Hiestand and Wilson as well as Vanhoozer and Strachan, have also offered insightful thoughts on the subject (Robinson, 2015).

However, some Reformed Evangelicals have cautioned against the notion of the pastor-scholar. In Piper's and Carson's collaborative effort on the topic, although open to the concept, Piper appeared to be more cautious about pastors being scholarly because of their tendency to be detached from their work in their desire to be objective, which he deems as detrimental to pastoral ministry (2011:22-23). Wilson (2015) also cautioned against the recent movement towards a scholarly focus among Evangelicals. He pointed out that three tensions make it difficult for pastors also to be scholars.

Firstly, the specialist-generalist tension: Wilson argues that because a scholar is a specialist in his or her field of study, he or she is not expected to be a specialist in every other field (Wilson, 2015). For instance, a New Testament scholar is not expected to be an expert in the Old Testament while pastors, on the other hand, are generalists. The general expectation of pastors is that they will have a good grasp of both the Old and The New Testament and on issues addressed in both.

Secondly, the practical-theoretical tension: Here Wilson considers that scholars are driven by theoretical questions, that is, are more concerned about researching problematic questions than apply their findings to their audience (Wilson 2015). Whereas, according to Wilson (2015), pastors are driven by practical questions, that is, they are concerned about applying their Scriptural exegesis to their audience.

Thirdly, the university-church tension: Wilson postulates that scholars are constrained by academic rules of nuances and finesse, while pastors are unconstrained by academic rules and are free to give interpretative opinions to their congregations (Wilson, 2015).

Piper and Wilson offer valuable reasons to support their concerns about the notion of pastor-scholar which should not be ignored. However, their concerns are not strong enough to deter, altogether, the pursuit of scholarship in pastoral ministry. Their cautions can be remedied by training and equipping pastor-scholars to balance their efforts to be objective in the effort to apply their work. As has been noted, Calvin placed immense emphasis on pastors being academically astute (section 5.3). However, he also censured the purely academic approach that was evident in the works of some of his contemporaries (section 4.2.4). Likewise, the fear of detachment as a result of academic influence or the seeming impossibility of balancing the two offices does not

seem to have been a deterrent for the Reformers pursuing biblical scholarship and pastoral duties and should not be one today.

6.3 An Intellectual Need in the African Church

In his lecture, 'Christian Intellectual Responsibilities in Modern Africa', Bowers (2013:13) points out what he believes are apparent intellectual gaps in African Christianity. He argues that the intellectual direction of Christianity in Africa, in general, is currently being shaped by the educated elite and not by the church (Bowers, 2013:3). Also, from this researcher's experience, in some churches and denominations there does not seem to be much of an emphasis on educated clergy, as we have noted in Calvin's theology, which has contributed to the lack of theological depth among clergy and thus the lay people.

Research needs to be conducted to determine the validity of these observations. But if Bower's argument and this researcher's observation are correct, then African Christianity needs to develop its theological depth. Calvin's emphasis on an educated clergy will need to be adopted by the African Churches. It would be a requirement by every Bible believing church for its clergy to be trained at a theological seminary and to hold at least an undergraduate degree to be ordained for ministry in that church or denomination. In this researcher's view, this will cause both the clergy and the lay people to prioritise theological depth in their teaching and preaching, while prioritising appropriating it, which seems to be a priority already.

6.4 Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that some of Calvin's significant theological works which have attracted both praise and criticism in the academe were an extension of his pastoral ministry instead of scholarly pursuits. This is significant as it implies that the often portrayed image of Calvin as a cold and detached scholar of the Bible, who has caused much damage in the church and in the world, needs to be re-evaluated, as scholarship was not his primary role in the church. Those who are sympathetic to him have also contributed to this often-distorted image by not adequately dealing with Calvin as primarily being a pastor in their discussions and interpretation of his works, as Godfrey (2009:8) points out. But in this study, we have noted that "The real Calvin was not, in the first place, a man who lived to influence future generations. Rather, he

was a spiritual pilgrim finding anew the apostolic Christianity expressed in the Bible and serving as a faithful minister of that Word in the church of his day.” (Godfrey, 2009:8.) This image of Calvin should inform the interpretation of most, if not all, of his scholarly works.

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